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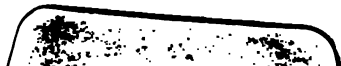
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P O E M S

NARRATIVE AND LYRICAL

BY

EDWIN ARNOLD

OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, OXFORD.



OXFORD:

FRANCIS MACPHERSON.

1853.

280, N. 18.




TO
FRANCES,
COUNTESS DOWAGER WALDEGRAVE

This Volume of Poems

IS INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.

DEDICATORY SONNET.

 F sound or strain in any lay of mine
Not all unwelcome or unworthy be—
If any pleasant measure lead the line,
And make faint echo of fair melody ;
That sound and strain is dedicate to thee,
And thine the measure ; for that thou of all
Unto my first and faltering minstrelsy
Didst lend most gracious ear ; if it befall,
As well it may, that all too low and long
The harp-string ringeth now, take thou no shame
That so I link thy merit with my song,
Thou courteous Lady ! for a noble name,
Not the less sheweth beautiful and bright,
Though pale the star that gives its letters light.


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VIOLETTA.

 H! was there ever tale of human love
Which was not also tale of human tears?
Died not sweet Desdemona? sorrowed
not

Fair, patient Imogen? and she whose name
Lives among lovers, Sappho silver-voiced.
Was not the wailing of her passionate lyre
Ended for ever in the dull, deaf sea?
Must it be thus? oh! must the cup that holds
The sweetest vintage of the vine of life
Taste bitter at the dregs? Is there no story,
No legend, no love-passage, which shall bend
Even as the bow that God hath bent in heaven
O'er the sad waste of mortal histories

Promising respite to the rain of tears ?

Meseems I do remember one ! it told
Of lovers led by angel hands together,
Who met most strangely, and who loved most
strongly

To the last kiss of life :—I heard it often
Down at Caserta, by the seven waters ;
Fioretta sang the story to her lute
At the Ave-Mary. Oh ! I would I had
The merry music of her easy tongue,
And the quick flash of her Italian eye,
So should ye listen to the very last.

She said—I think it was at set of sun—
Down the green hill where the Velino rushes,
And through the valley where he rests, and then
On to the village came a way-farer
Of noble bearing : young and fair he was
With smoothest face and forehead ; whereupon
Time had not written wrinkles : at his heels
The scabbard of his sword kept even time,
Merrily clinking on the mountain stone
With every stride—oh ! but he had an eye
To make a Lady look once and again
Where if she looked she could not choose but love ;

The village girls dancing about the well
Stayed the quick music of the mandoline
Even at the quickest, as he passed them by ;
Whereat with smile, and ready compliment,
And jewelled bonnet doffed, and brown curls bowed,
He questioned of the leagues that lay between him
And the "Tre Mauri"—"Not a league, fair Sir,
"But you shall find the Castle and the Court
"Full to the roof, and it were very pity
"To dull such doublet with the mountain-mist
"And rust your newsword ere the sun hath seen it."
"—Nay, I must on!"—"Well, there's the haunted
chamber ;
"If you can look a ghost into the face
"As you can look a girl, I nothing question
"There's sleeping-room; so farewell, Signor mine."
And so with laughing lip and curled moustache
Montorio left them laughing, and at night
Beat with his dagger-hilt upon a door,
Which opened up into the spacious court
Of what was now a hostel, but had once
Been Albertino's palace. Little recked he
Though there were dances on the garden grass,
And rustling satins, and brocades of gold

In every alley ; and the glint of gems,
And quiet float of feathers in the hall ;
Only he eased him of his belt and sword,
And after ortolans and Alban wine
Followed the torches of the seneschal
Along the rushes to an ancient room
Where after many drowsy beads he slept
Dreamless and still.

Above him in the turret

There sat two sisters beautiful—but one
Most beautiful : even as the evening star
Sits in her place among the silver worlds
Most silvery. The Lady Violetta
On wrist and arm of rounded ivory
Resting her brow, read from the painted page
The legend of the Milanese Manzoni
Until the night was old : close at her side
Sat Beatricè at the broider frame,
Drawing the stained silks slow and slower still,
For that her eyes were heavy : so at last,
Bidding her sister seek her in the chamber,
Her quiet feet left Violetta reading,
With bright eyes wearied, but with heart unfilled.
How long the story held her, that I know not ;

But long enough it was to let the sand
Slide from the thrice-turned glass, and the light
flicker

As though it strove to live and look upon her ;
So that she started, and with opened lips,
As when a bud opens to be a rose,
Breathed from the dying lamp its little life,
And stripping off the flowers from her forehead,
Let the great waves of gold go to the ground,
And walked in the white moonlight to her bed.

And now she sleepeth, beautiful and calm,
With those long glossy tresses for a night-robe,
And her blue eyelids down upon her eyes ;
Ha ! methought Beatrice's hair was black !
Whose are yon sleeper's clustering curls of brown ?
Brown !—she has missed the chamber, and is laid
By young Montorio, most unwittingly
Wandering hither slumbrous and unlighted :
Look, they are sleeping side by side ; their hearts
Beating one measure, and their warm breath meet-
ing,
And his bright locks and her long tresses tangled,
Whose eyes have never met by daylight. Stay !
Stir not ! and speak not ! oh, how shall it end ?

They sleep! the spangled night is melting off,
And still they sleep: the holy moon looks in,
In at the painted window-panes, and flings
Ruby, blue, purple, emerald, amethyst,
Crystal and orange colours on their limbs;
And round her face a glory of white light,
As one who sins not: on the tapestries
Gold lights are flashing like the wings of angels,
Bringing these two hearts to be single-hearted.

They sleep! and it is morning! her white hand
Falls light as snow on his, and sends a dream,
A quick strange dream into his heart, whose joy
Goes through the spirit to the sense, and lifts
The curtain of his eye;—what doth he gaze on!—
Is the dream vanished, but the dream's dear glory
Left him for comfort? Ah! that hasty cry
Hath snapped the spell! she starts,—and she is
gone,—

Rose-colour from the forehead to the foot.—

He thinks it is a spirit, and will kneel;—
But kneeling, spies a bracelet: pearl and gold
Warm from the wearer, where her foot was last;
So hath he kissed it lovingly, and laid it
Close at his heart, and when the house was up

Asked of the busy Hostess earnestly :—

“ Who holds the upper chamber of the turret ? ”—

“ The lady Violetta and her sister,

“ Last night, fair Sir ; but when the sun was up

“ They rose, and parted from us, Venice-ward.”

He wrote the name upon his heart, and wandered
Away into the world to search for her.—

Twice a year ended :—at Perugia

There was a solemn mass at Whitsuntide,

The chaunt of priests, and song of choristers

Rose with the ringing of the loaded censers,

And the low breathing of a people's prayers,

So that the sound went through the fluted pillars,

Down the long nave, out by the portal-arch,

Into the square, and smote upon the ear

Of one who walked disconsolate ; he turned,

Following as it were an angel's word,

And bent his proud knee on the marble, praying ;

And as he prayed the weight went from his heart,

And the dull longing and the baffled search

Of twice twelve moons faded before the song

Of her who knelt beside him, for she sang

“ The Psalm of ended trials ;” presently
The veil was raised, and it was—Violetta,
Once more Montorio was by her side !

Oh ! shall I tell ye how he wooed and won her,
Or when he won her, how he stamped the kiss,
The long-delayed and life-expected kiss
Upon her rose-leaf lips, and took her wrist
And clasped the bracelet on, and whispered low
With a light laugh that none might understand,
“ Sweet Violetta ! hadst thou not lost this,
“ And thy dear self beside, I had not won
“ A noble, beautiful, and gentle wife.”

THE MARRIAGE.



HE robing is done,

The bells have begun.

And the bride is as bright as a rising
sun.

And her cheeks that gleam,

And her smiles that beam,

Laugh at her tear-drops too light to stream.

The bridegroom gay

Goeth first on the way,

Featly and free as a bridegroom may ;

With a glance of pride

For the bonny bride,

Like ivy to elm clinging close at his side.

And one is waiting

The gallant mating

Close by the church at the convent grating,

Gnawing his lip
With an angry grip,
Till down on his beard the blood doth drip.

The light plume dances,
The proud steed prances,
Gaily along the good show advances ;
With mantle untied
And cap at his side
The stranger is pressing to reach the bride.

And strange their meeting—
No courtly greeting,—
But a frightened look and a fierce heart beating,
Through silk and brocade
He urges a blade,
And the cold steel point at her heart is stayed.

And a quiet word,
Through the silence heard,
Comes, ere the foremost a foot hath stirred—
“ My love was great,
“ She paid it with hate,
“ One dagger will serve for a double fate.”

The bridegroom gay
Looked once at the clay
And maddened, and howled his life away.
And the three souls dwell,
So the friars tell,
Two in high heaven, and one in hell. .

QUENTIN MATSYS.



MEMORY of the past hath wondrous
power

To gild the present, and to throw a veil
Of rare enchantment o'er the spot it haunts,
Blinding the rapt soul's vision to all else
But what is beautiful. And thus a tale
An old sweet tale of love hath lent a charm
To every painted wall and pointed roof,
And quaint bye lane in Antwerp. You should hear
The Flemish girls at evening telling it,
Till their blue, laughing eyes grow sad for pity
And bright again for joy. How, on a time
Close where the court-house stands, there lived a
smith,
One Quentin Matsys, and his calling was
To torture stubborn iron into form
Of swords, and helmets, and spears, and coats of mail
For gallant knights; and figured canopies

To roof their tombs; aye, and fine glittering chains
For dainty ladies' necks. The massy hammer
Was his best friend, and its deep ringing song
Early and late came cheerly. 'Till at mass
His eye one instant from the missal wandered
And met another's,—oh! so starry bright
That he forgot his prayers to gaze upon it.
And in the feast that day, mid many forms,
Hers—only hers, he saw—rich music sounded,
But it seemed dull, when smilingly and soft,
She thanked him for some service. Wonder ye
That thought of furnaces and Spanish steel
Was gone from out his heart, all to make room
For that soft smile? alas, 'twas even so!
The hammer's song was still; its master's arm
Was with his heart; and in the silent forge
Helms lay unriveted, and shields unbraced;
Swords, hiltless and unpolished; till at last,
From her own lips he heard half-uttered words,
That told him he was loved, even as he loved.

She was a Painter's daughter,—bold for love
He told his earnest suit, and prayed her hand
In words that his full heart made eloquence.
Silent the Father heard; then as he sate

In jewelled silks, and velvet furbelowed,
With works of mighty masters on the wall,
And all his art's appliances about him,
A thin smile curled his pale patrician lip,
And cold and slow the cruel sentence came :
“ A painter's daughter may not wed a smith ;
“ Paint me like this and these, and thou shalt have
her.”

Died then his love ? Listen ! The maiden wept
Such pearly tears, that in his bursting heart
Grew up strange hopes. Alas ! to few is given
The magic skill that limns in lifelike hues,
A speaking lip, an eye that beams and loves,
A moving majesty like nature's own,
Save that this may not die : it is a gift
Higher and holier than a common man
May dare to reach at ; oh ! by what right then
Dared he to dream of it ? by what right ! Love's !
The love that lifts a peasant to a king,
The love that knows no doubting ! Well he knew,
Too well for his fond hopes, that brawny arms
Guide not the pencil, and that smithy strokes
Fix not the fancies of a painter's mind ;
But still for that. To gaze into the eyes

That sparkled all for him, was inspiration
 Better than painter's best: long days and nights
 He strove as only lovers strive; at last
 The passport to the haven of his hopes
 Came in a touch, as if some angel hand
 Had dipt his brush in life; and as the form
 His fancy pictured, slowly,—slowly grew,
 And woke into broad being, then at last
 He knew that he had won his golden prize—
 That she was his for ever.

Antwerp's bells

Rang out right merrily one sunny day
 Blue kirtles and bright hose, and brighter faces;—
 Rhenish and sack, dancing and songs there were,
 Feasting and music, and mad revelry,
 And all to keep the wedding:—cavaliers
 And high-born ladies stood to see them pass,
 He, Quentin Matsys, and his blooming bride;
 With witching smiles, and nods, and waving hands.
 And how the caps flew up! and how they cried,
 “No knight so gallant as the artist smith,”
 “No dame so lovely as the Painter's daughter;”
 “Sweet Mary Mother! guard them!”

It must end

Like an old Wife's tale, with a "they lived happy ;"
But 'tis most true ; and if ye doubt its truth,
Go where proud Windsor rises like a rock
In a green sea of summer meadows ; pace
From hall to hall, through echoing corridors
And vaulted galleries, till the enchanted eye
Rest on a painting, where the limner's art
Hath caught the trick of life ; there shall you see
The miser's withered cheek and rugged brow
And cold unfeeling eye ; nay, almost hear
His cursed florins ring ; then think of him,
Whose passionate love taught him such lore as this,
And hope on joyously ; remembering ever
There are no kings on earth but loving hearts,
And these rule Earth and Heaven !—

THE EGYPTIAN PRINCESS.

HEROD. BK. 2, CH. 132.



HERE was fear and desolation over
 swarthy Egypt's land,
 From the holy city of the sun to hot
 Syenè's sand ;
 The sistrum and the cymbal slept, the merry dance
 no more
 Trampled the evening river-buds by Nile's em-
 broidered shore,
 For the daughter of the king must die, the dark
 magicians said,
 Before the red sun sank to rest that day in ocean's
 bed.

A.

C

And all that day the temple-smoke loaded the heavy
air,

But they prayed to one who heedeth none, nor
heareth earnest prayer.

That day the gonfalons were down, the silver lamps
untrimmed,

Sad at their oars the rowers sat, silent the Nile-boat
skimmed,

And through the land there went a wail of bitterest
agony,

From the iron hills of Nubia, to the islands of the
sea.

There, in the very hall where once her laugh had
loudest been,

Where but that morning she had worn the wreath
of Beauty's Queen,

She lay, a lost but lovely thing—the wreath was on
her brow,

Alas! the lotus might not match its chilly paleness
now ;

And ever as that golden light sank lower in the
sky,

Her breath came fainter, and the beam seemed
fading in her eye.

Her coal-black hair was tangled, and the sigh of
parting day
Stirred tremblingly its silky folds as on her breast
they lay ;
How heavily her rounded arm lay buried by her
side !
How droopingly her lashes seemed those star-bright
eyes to hide !
And once there played upon her lips a smile like
summer air,
As though Death came with gentle face, and she
mocked her idle fear.

Low o'er the dying maiden's form the king and
father bows,
Stern anguish holds the place of pride upon the
monarch's brows—
“ My daughter, in the world thou leav'st so dark
without thy smile,

Hast thou one care a Father's love—a King's word
 may beguile—
Hast thou one last light wish—'tis thine—by Isis'
 throne on high,
If Egypt's blood can win it thee, or Egypt's treasure
 buy."

How anxiously he waits her words ; upon the
 painted wall
In long gold lines the dying lights between the co-
 lumns fall ;
It lends her sinking limbs a glow, her pallid cheek
 a blush,
And on her lifted lashes throws a fitful lingering
 flush,
And on her parting lips it plays : oh ! how they
 crowd to hear
The words that will be iron chains to bind them to
 her prayer :—

“ Father, dear father, it is hard to die so very
 young,
“ Summer was coming, and I thought to see the
 flowers sprung,

“ Must it be always dark like this?—I cannot see
thy face—

“ I am dying, hold me, Father, in thy kind and
close embrace ;

“ Oh ! let them sometimes bear me where the
merry sunbeams lie,

“ I know thou wilt, farewell, farewell ! ’tis easier
now to die !”

Small need of bearded leeches there ; not all Ara-
bia’s store

Of precious balm could purchase her one ray of
sunlight more ;

Was it strange that tears were glistening where tears
should never be,

When death had smitten down to dust, the beauti-
ful and free ?

Was it strange that warriors should raise a woman’s
earnest cry

For help and hope to Heaven’s throne, when such
as she must die ?

And ever when the shining sun has brought the
summer round,

And the Nile rises fast and full along the thirsty
ground,
They bear her from her silent home to where the
gay sunlight
May linger on the hollow eyes that once were
starry bright,
And strew sweet flowers upon her breast, while
gray-haired matrons tell
Of the high Egyptian maiden-queen that loved the
light so well!

THE FALCON-FEAST.

WELL and wisely spake the master
 Of the silver Tuscan talk,
 Love should laugh at all disaster

If with wisdom he would walk.

And to you the word is spoken,

Ladies, therefore, ponder well;

That by every certain token

Your true lovers you may tell:

Only be ye gentle hearted;

Beauty rich and wisdom rare

From a gentle spirit parted

Earneth hate and causeth care.

One there was—no prayers could move her;

Listen to the tale they tell;

How she scorned a faithful lover,

How she came to love him well.

Gianetta, Marco's daughter,

Lord of many pleasant lands;

And she lived by Arno's water,
Where the marble city stands.
All in Florence she was fairest,
Fair and rich exceedingly ;
Where the dames are of the rarest
None so beautiful as she.
Courtiers with best beguiling,
Praised her black and lustrous eye,
Knights for Gianetta's smiling
Saddest death would gladdest die.
None among them loved her truly ;
Lightest heart can loudest woo—
But to love a lady duly
Asketh earnest heart and true ;
Asketh lover like Frederigo ;
He alone did love her well,
Heir was he of Alberigo,
Alberigo of Castel ;
In the lists with deeds of daring
Manfully he did her will ;
In the hall with gallant bearing
Loyally he served her still :
Read her eyes and did their meanings
Long before her lip had stirred,

Treasured all her lightest leanings,
Noted every careless word,
Till his little wealth was vanished,
And his thoughtful cheek was pale ;
Then at last the fear he banished,
And he told his loving tale.
Spake she then, " I know you fearless,
" And I do believe you true ;
" But my heart is free and careless,
" And indeed I love not you."
Sadly then he shook the bridle,
Sadly spurred his charger thence ;—
Oh ! they sting from the heart's idol,
Words of calm indifference.
Half a league from Marco's palace
Sadly lived he summers three,
Full of love and free of malice,
Bearing bitter poverty.
Bearing life too sad and sorry,
But for one poor falcon's love ;
Swifter never stooped at quarry,
Better never came to glove.
Where the swan was up and flying
She could fetch him from the sky,

When the swan lay torn and dying,
 Patiently she waited by.
So it fell—the lady's brother
 Sickened even to the death ;
And she loved him more than other,
 Loved him better than her breath ;
Thus she sat where he was lying,
 Talking gentle woman-talk,
Sudden spake he, deeply sighing,
 “ Fetch me Frederigo's hawk ;
“ For her quick and merry playing
 “ Bringeth back the smile to me ;
“ Sister mine, make no delaying—
 “ He would give his blood to thee.”
Oh ! it shamed her to be seeking
 Help of him in time of need,
But the sick boy's eager speaking
 Won her spirit to the deed.
At her lover's door alighted
 Blushing doubtfully she stands ;
He, beyond compare delighted,
 Kneeling kissed his lady's hands :
She to find him loving-hearted
 Wondering exceedingly,

Sayeth, " For the days departed,
I am come to sup with thee."
To the largest room he leadeth,
Bringeth of his fruits the best ;
But alas ! his cottage needeth
Banquet meet for Lady-guest.
Even as he pondered weeping,
Weeping bitterly, I wist,
From the sky his falcon sweeping,
Perched upon his master's wrist.
Fair she was, and glossy-feathered,
Sleek and fat, with shining crest ;
On his cheek the big tear gathered
With the purpose of his breast.
Spake he then : " Beyond denying,
" Best of birds that ever flew,
" Living serv'dst thou well, and dying
" Better service thou shalt do."
So for one who loved him never
Slew he what had loved him well :
Gianetta silent ever
Feasted till the sunlight fell ;
Then in accent faint and broken
Told him all her brother's wish—

Nothing hath the lover spoken,
 Only points he to the dish.
All at once the silken lashes
 Droop and quiver on her eyes,
All at once her fair cheek flashes,
 Flashes red with glad surprise.
Thrice and once her lips were parted,
 Thrice and once she strove to speak;
Sudden from her seat she started,
 And she kissed him on the cheek,
Kissed him fearlessly, and faltered:
 “ Oh! if thou canst pardon me,
“ If the old love lives unaltered,
 “ Thus—and thus—I pay it thee.”

ACADEME.

PLEASANTER than the hills of Thessaly,
 Nearer and dearer to the poet's heart
 Than the blue ripple belting Salamis,
 Or long grass waving over Marathon,
 Fair Academe—most holy Academe,
 Thou art, and hast been, and shalt ever be.
 I would be numbered now with things that were,
 Changing the wasting fever of to-day
 For the dear quietness of yesterday :—
 I would be ashes, underneath the grass,
 So I had wandered in thy platane walks
 One happy summer twilight—even one :—
 Was it not grand, and beautiful and rare,
 The music, and the wisdom, and the shade,
 The music of the pebble-paven rills,
 And olive boughs, and bowered nightingales,
 Chorussing joyously the joyous things
 Told by the gray Silenus of the grove,

Low-fronted and large-hearted Socrates !
Oh ! to have seen under the olive blossoms
But once—once only in a mortal life,
The marble majesties of ancient Gods !
And to have watched the ring of listeners,
The Grecian boys gone mad for love of Truth,
The Grecian girls gone pale for love of him
Who taught the truth, who battled for the truth ;
And girls and boys, women and bearded men,
Crowding to hear and treasure in their hearts
Matter to make their lives a happiness,
And Death a happy ending.

One there was

A meek disciple and an equal friend,
Who night by night in rocky Megara
Waited the coming of the evening star,
As young Leander waited for the lighting
Of Hero's lamp ; and when the star was up
Then rose he from the watch, and flung aside
The broidered tunic and the leathern boot,
Marking him masculine, and round his heart
Folded a woman's robe, and on his foot
Buckled a woman's shoe, and hid his beard
Under the wimple of a woman's hood,

Lest the bright glitter of its golden curl
Bring him to death, for there was come a law,
Told to the city from the trumpet-mouth :—
“ If citizen of Megara shall tread
“ The stones of Athens, he shall surely die.”
But what are laws of men to him who lusted
To learn the laws of God ; he journeyed on
Safe in his secrecy, the weary stades
From Megara to Athens, never failing.
And from the early flower-buds that break
To see where summer tarries : to the frost
That glitters first of Autumn, all the nights
His soul was banqueting with Socrates.

One night—the last of all the happy nights—
They tracked him thitherward ; he knew the fangs
Of the fierce bloodhounds that had hunted him,
Though they were habited in gentle guise
Of teachable disciples, so he spake :—
“ Dear master, I have earned the right to listen
“ Only at cost of life, and they are here
“ Who know me for thy country’s enemy,
“ And I must die, oh ! is it pain to die ?
“ Tell me one word of this fierce-fronted Death

“ Who strikes us to the soul.” Then answered he,
That mighty teacher of the right and wrong :

Who told thee that death was dreadful to see,
A withered and ghastly anatomy,
 Faint, longing heart ?
That he rides in his wrath where the earth is red,
Striking her daintiest children dead
 With a venomous dart ?

He weareth a dim and a shadowy form,
Like the varying clouds of a summer storm
 With beauty like theirs ;
And he speedeth o'er city and sea and land,
With a still soft step and a gentle hand,
 Drying up tears.

And they that have gazed on his pitying look
Are free to read in the spirit-book
 Where all things are told ;
And the sick heart's struggle is over then,
And the soul springs up from its earthly den
 To its home of old.

What though he come then, this gentle Death,
With a quick faint pang, and a flagging breath,
Shall we fear the meeting ?
Maiden and lover, and poet and slave, [grave
We should welcome him well at the gate of the
With a proud, glad greeting.

He ended ; and the nightingales anew
Sang clear contempt of pain, with feathered breasts
Bleeding against the thorn ; the tear of terror
Dried into smile upon the scholar's cheek,
A peaceful happy smile ; that night he bought
His spirit's freedom with his body's blood.

THE FEAST OF BELSHAZZAR.

SYNOPSIS.

“Belshazzar’s impious feast; a handwriting, unknown to the magicians, troubleth the king. At the commendation of the queen, Daniel is brought; He, reproving the king of pride and idolatry, readeth and interpreteth the writing. The monarchy is translated to the Medes.”—*Daniel*, ch. 5.

ἀλλ' ἴσθι τοι τὰ σκληρὰ ἄγαν φρονήματα
πίπτειν μάλιστα.



NOT by one portal, or one path alone
God’s holy messages to men are known;
Waiting the glances of his awful eyes
Silver-winged Seraphs do him embassies;
And stars interpreting his high behest
Guide the lone feet and glad the failing breast—
The rolling thunder and the raging sea
Speak the stern purpose of the Deity,
And storms beneath and rainbow hues above
Herald his anger or proclaim his love:

The still small voices of the summer day,
The red Sirocco, and the breath of May,
The lingering harmony in Ocean shells,
The fairy music of the meadow bells,
Earth and void Air—Water and wasting Flame
Have words to whisper, tongues to tell his name.
Once—with no cloak of careful mystery
Himself was herald of his own decree ;
The hand that edicts on the marble drew
Graved the stern sentence of their scorner too.
Listen and learn ! Tyrants have heard the tale,
And turned from hearing terror-struck and pale,
Spiritless captives sinking with the chain
Have read this page and taken heart again.—

From sunlight unto starlight trumpets told
Her King's command in Babylon the old,
From sunlight unto starlight west and east
A thousand satraps girt them for the feast,
And reined their chargers to the palace hall
Where King Belshazzar held high festival :
A pleasant palace under pleasant skies
With cloistered courts and gilded galleries,
And gay kiosk and painted balustrade

For winter terraces and summer shade ;
By court and terrace, minaret and dome,
Euphrates, rushing from his mountain home,
Rested his rage, and curbed his crested pride
To belt that palace with his bluest tide ;
Broad-fronted bulls with chiselled feathers barred
In silent vigil keeping watch and ward,
Giants of granite wrought by cunning hand
Guard in the gate and frown upon the land :
Not summer's glow nor yellow autumn's glare
Pierced the broad tamarisks that blossomed there ;
The moonbeam darting through their leafy screen
Lost half its silver in the softened green,
And fell with lessened lustre, broken light,
Tracing quaint arabesque of dark and white ;
Or dimly tinting on the graven stones
The pictured annals of Chaldæan thrones.—
There, from the rising to the setting day
Birds of bright feather sang the light away,
And fountain waters on the palace-floor
Made even answer to the river's roar,
Rising in silver from the crystal well
And breaking into spangles as they fell ;
Though now ye heard them not—for far along

Rang the broad chorus of the banquet song,
And sounds as gentle, echoes soft as these
Died out of hearing from the revelries.

High on a throne of ivory and gold,
From crown to footstool clad in purple fold,
Lord of the east from sea to distant sea
The king Belshazzar feasteth royally—
And not that dreamer in the desert cave
Peopled his paradise with pomp as brave :
Vessels of silver, cups of crusted gold
Blush with a brighter red than all they hold ;
Pendulous lamps like planets of the night
Flung on the diadems a fragrant light,
Or slowly swinging in the midnight sky
Gilded the ripples as they glided by :—
And sweet and sweeter rang the cittern-string
Soft as the beating of a Seraph's wing,
And swift and swifter in the measured dance
The tresses gather and the sandals glance,
And bright and brighter at the festal board
The flagons bubble and the wines are poured ;
No lack of goodly company was there,
No lack of laughing eyes to light the cheer ;

From Dara trooped they, from Daremma's grove
The suns of battle and the moons of love ;
From where Arsissa's silver waters sleep
To Imla's marshes and the inland deep,
From pleasant Calah and from Sittacene
The horseman's captain and the Harem's queen,—

It seemed no summer-cloud of passing woe
Could fling its shadow on so fair a show—
It seemed the gallant forms that feasted there
Were all too grand for woe, too great for care—
Whence came the anxious eye, the altered tone,
The dull presentiment no heart would own,
That ever changed the smiling to a sigh
Sudden as sea-bird flashing from the sky:—
It is not that they know the spoiler waits
Harnessed for battle at the brazen gates,
It is not that they hear the watchman's call
Mark the slow minutes on the leaguered wall,
The clash of quivers and the ring of spears
Make pleasant music in a soldier's ears :
And not a scabbard hideth sword to-night
That hath not glimmered in the front of fight—
May not the blood in every beating vein

Have quick foreknowledge of the coming pain ?
Even as the prisoned silver,* dead and dumb
Shrinks at cold Winter's footfall ere he come.—

The king hath felt it and the heart's unrest
Heaved the broad purple of his belted breast ;
Sudden he speaks—"What! doth the beaded juice
" Savour like hyssop that ye scorn its use ?
" Wear ye so pitiful and sad a soul
" That tramp of foemen scares ye from the bowl ?
" Think ye the gods on yonder starry floor
" Tremble for terror, when the thunders roar ?
" Are we not gods ? have we not fought with God ?
" And shall we shiver at a robber's nod ?
" No—let them batter till the brazen bars
" Ring merry mocking of their idle wars—
" Their fall is fated for to-morrow's sun,
" The lion rouses when his feast is done—
" Crown me a cup—and fill the bowls we brought
" From Judah's temple when the fight was fought—
" Drink, till the merry madness fill the soul
" To Salem's conqueror in Salem's bowl—

* The quicksilver in the tube of the thermometer.

“ Each from the goblet of a God shall sip
 “ And Judah’s gold tread heavy on the lip.”*

The last loud answer dies along the line,
 The last light bubble bursts upon the wine,
 His eager lips are on the jewelled brink,
 Hath the cup poison that he doubts to drink?
 Is there a spell upon the sparkling gold,
 That so his fevered fingers quit their hold?
 Whom sees he where he gazes? what is there
 Freezing his vision into fearful stare?
 Follow his lifted arm and lighted eye
 And watch with them the wondrous mystery.—

There cometh forth a hand—upon the stone,
 Graving the symbols of a speech unknown;
 Fingers like mortal fingers—leaving there
 The blank wall flashing characters of fear—
 And still it glideth silently and slow,
 And still beneath the spectral letters grow—
 Now the scroll endeth—now the seal is set—
 The hand is gone—the record tarries yet.—

* “He never drinks

But Timon’s silver treads upon his lip.” SHAK. *Tit. Andr.*

As one who waits the warrant of his death,
With pale lips parted and with bridled breath—
They watch the sign and dare not turn to seek
Their fear reflected in their fellows' cheek—
But stand as statues where the life is none,
Half the jest uttered—half the laughter done—
Half the flask empty—half the flagon poured,—
Each where the phantom found him at the board
Struck into silence—as December's arm
Curbs the quick ripples into crystal calm.—

With wand of ebony and sable stole
Chaldæa's wisest scan the spectral scroll—
Strong in the lessons of a lying art
Each comes to gaze, but gazes to depart—
And still for mystic sign and muttered spell
The graven letters guard their secret well—
Gleam they for warning—glare they to condemn—
God speaketh,—but he speaketh not for them.—

Oh! ever, when the happy laugh is dumb,
All the joy gone, and all the anguish come—
When strong adversity and subtle pain

Wring the sad soul and rack the throbbing brain—
When friends once faithful, hearts once all our own
Leave us to weep, to bleed and die alone—
When fears and cares the lonely thought employ,
And clouds of sorrow hide the sun of joy—
When weary life, breathing reluctant breath
Hath no-hope sweeter than the hope of death—
Then the best counsel and the last relief
To cheer the spirit or to cheat the grief,
The only calm, the only comfort heard
Comes in the music of a woman's word—
Like beacon-bell on some wild island-shore,
Silverly ringing in the tempest's roar,
Whose sound borne shipward through the midnight
 gloom
Tells of the path, and turns her from her doom.

So in the silence of that awful hour
When baffled magic mourned its parted power—
When kings were pale and satraps shook for fear,
A woman speaketh—and the wisest hear—
She—the high daughter of a thousand thrones
Telling with trembling lip and timid tones
Of him the Captive, in the feast forgot,

Who readeth visions—him, whose wondrous lot
Sends him to lighten doubt and lessen gloom,
And gaze undazzled on the days to come—
Daniel the Hebrew, such his name and race,
Held by a monarch highest in his grace,
He may declare—Oh!—bid them quickly send,
So may the mystery have happy end!—

Calmly and silent as the fair full moon
Comes sailing upward in the sky of June—
Fearfully as the troubled clouds of night
Shrink from before the coming of its light—
So through the hall the Prophet passed along,
So from before him fell the festal throng—
By broken wassail-cup, and wine o'erthrown
Pressed he still onward for the monarch's throne—
His spirit failed him not—his quiet eye
Lost not its light for earthly majesty;
His lip was steady and his accent clear,
“The king hath needed me, and I am here.”—

“Art thou the Prophet? read me yonder scroll
“Whose undeciphered horror daunts my soul—
“There shall be guerdon for the grateful task,

“ Fitted for me to give, for thee to ask—
“ A chain to deck thee—and a robe to grace,
“ Thine the third throne and thou the third in place.”

He heard—and turned him where the lighted wall
Dimmed the red torches of the festival,
Gazed on the sign with steady gaze and set,
And he who quailed not at a kingly threat
Bent the true knee and bowed the silver hair,
For that he knew the King of kings was there—
Then nerved his soul the sentence to unfold,
While his tongue trembled at the tale it told—
And never tongue shall echo tale as strange
Till that change cometh which must never change.

“ Keep for thyself the guerdon and the gold—
“ What God hath graved, God’s prophet must
 unfold ;
“ Could not thy father’s crime, thy father’s fate
“ Teach thee the terror thou hast learnt too late—
“ Hast thou not read the lesson of his life,
“ Who wars with God shall strive a losing strife ?
“ His was a kingdom mighty as thine own,
“ The sword his sceptre and the earth his throne—


“ The nations trembled when his awful eye
“ Gave to them leave to live or doom to die—
“ The Lord of Life—the Keeper of the grave,
“ His frown could wither and his smile could save—
“ Yet when his heart was hard, his spirit high
“ God drove him from his kingly majesty,
“ Far from the brotherhood of fellow men
“ To seek for dwelling in the desert den ;
“ Where the wild asses feed and oxen roam
“ He sought his pasture and he made his home,
“ And bitter-biting frost and dews of night
“ Schooled him in sorrow till he knew the right,
“ That God is ruler of the rulers still
“ And setteth up the sovereign that he will :
“ Oh ! hadst thou treasured in repentant breast
“ His pride and fall, his penitence and rest,
“ And bowed submissive to Jehovah’s will,
“ Then had thy sceptre been a sceptre still—
“ But thou hast mocked the majesty of heaven,
“ And shamed the vessels to its service given,
“ And thou hast fashioned idols of thine own
“ Idols of gold, of silver, and of stone ;
“ To them hast bowed the knee, and breathed the
 breath,

“ And they must help thee in the hour of death.
“ Woe for the sign unseen, the sin forgot,
“ God was among ye, and ye knew it not!
“ Hear what he sayeth now, ‘ Thy race is run,
“ The years are numbered and the days are done,
“ Thy soul hath mounted in the scale of fate,
“ The Lord hath weighed thee and thou lackest
weight;
“ Now in thy palace porch the spoilers stand,
“ To seize thy sceptre, to divide thy land.’ ”

He ended—and his passing foot was heard,
But none made answer, not a lip was stirred—
Mute the free tongue and bent the fearless brow,—
The mystic letters had their meaning now!
Soon came there other sound—the clash of steel,
The heavy ringing of the iron heel—
The curse in dying, and the cry for life,
The bloody voices of the battle strife.—

That night they slew him on his father’s throne,
The deed unnoticed and the hand unknown;
Crownless and sceptreless Belshazzar lay,
A robe of purple; round a form of clay.

SIR EVELYNGE; A FRAGMENT.


DOUBT ye no more! there are those on
 high
 Who minister well to mortality;
 Angels of heaven and angels of earth,
 Some who have passed the death and the birth;
 Some who in heaven had rank and right
 When the night was day and the day was night,
 And they lighten the doubts, and lessen the cares
 And keep a count of the mourner's tears,
 With power to bless and with strength to save,
 Though it be at the brink of the lonely grave;
 And doubt ye not! in the world below
 For the givers of joy there are bringers of woe;
 Devils to tempt, as angels to aid,
 Whose joy is the sight of a soul betrayed;
 Spirits of ill, that have mightiest power
 Of the heart in its gay and unguarded hour;

Or still if ye doubt—let the doubt be dumb,
And the lips be locked ere the thought can come ;
Lest the soul be snared like a heedless thing,
In the pride of its vain imagining,
And ye die the dark death of Sir Evelynge !

He came of a Lord, who crossed the sea
With twice two hundred spears,
When Normen left green Normandie
For a fairer land than theirs ;
His mother taught him at her knee
To read the book and pray ;
Alas ! I wist that constantly
His eyes would turn away.
Small counsel took he of her love,
Small comfort of her prayer ;
His mother is a saint above,
She shall not see him there.
Yet was he wise and learned well
In a scholar's subtle lore ;
And yet at Oxenforde they tell
How brave a name he bore ;
But his heart was full, and the books were dull,
And he flung them aside with glee,

For the heedless laughter of wassailers
And the riotous revelrie.
And ever the jest that he loved the best
Was the jest of the tavern-board,
And for worthless love of a wanton breast
His goods and his gold he poured.


It chanced he lay at the break of day
At home, in the Eastern Chepe ;
His eyes were dull with the wassail bowl,
But it seemed he might not sleep.
Wearily gazed he upon the wall,
Wearily on the floor ;
The rushes were stirred with a slow footfall,
He looked to the opened door.
Jesu Maria ! what sight is there !
A Lady surpassingly tall and fair !

On her white forehead was the black hair braided,
Above the black hair sat a blacker hood,
Whose velvet folds fell sombrely, and shaded
Her pale cheeks' sorrowful and solemn mood ;
She spake not, and she stirred not, and she breathed
not,

But eyed him earnestly still where she stood,
And he wondered most at the glistening eye
Gazing on him so steadfastly ;
For its gleam was the gleam of the planet's light
Seen through the cypress at dead of night,
Or the lurid glare of the furnace-light,
Piercing and keen and clear :
And over the orbs, like a bow drawn back,
Was a double arch of the deepest black
Spanning her forehead fair.

[*Cætera desunt.*]

ALLEY.


DO remember well at Kilcrea*
 The castle, and the friary, and bridge;
 And I remember better how I sat
 Half a long summer morning, and flung shells
 Into the ripples, thinking all the while
 Of her I love more than I love my life,
 And of the buried crocks of yellow gold
 Under the castle; and how grand it were
 To steal the treasure from its goblin guard,
 And fly with her, and one great sack of money
 To merry Florence, or the Southern seas,
 And there to build a palace—white and gold—
 With terraces and marble porticoes,
 Leagues of blue water at the garden-gate
 And miles of purple vineyards at the door;
 And so to live on music and true love

* I have done little more, in this, than paraphrase Mrs. S. C. Hall's exquisite narration.

And wise old books—just then, a step beneath
Started a pebble, and my dream together.

—An aged woman leaning on a staff
Toiled slowly up the slope—her linen cap
Fastened beneath by one broad band of black,
Kept the white hair close down upon a face
That once I thought might have been beautiful;
But there were marks of many weary winters
Written upon it now :—so reverently
Thinking some day my mother might be such,
I rose to help her to the resting-place.

“ ’Tis weary work,” I said, “ for one so old
To climb these hills; you came the rugged road
By the Priest’s leap from Kenmare.”—“ Ay,” she
said,

“ But willing hearts make the feet willing too;
And when I climb and climb, it makes it easy
To think I’m wending nearer God—they say
He lives there in the blue.”—

“ If I may ask,”

I answered, “ wherefore do you journey now?
You should be sitting under a warm roof
With children’s children waiting at your knees
To bring your knitting, do your messages,

And fight for the first kiss :—the calmest hour
Of all calm hours in the summer day
Is the day's ending ; so should life's end be."

I thought her eyes had held no tears, but tears
Came as I spake, and trickled heavily
Down on her rosary of ebon beads.
The linnet swinging in the water-rush
Ended one song, and launched his little heart
Into another, ere the words would come.
Then she spake out calmly and solemnly,
As one whose sorrow is a memory ;
For sorrow grows not weaker with the years ;
The years make the heart stronger for the sorrow.

" The storm came in the middle of my life ;
My husband died (O may his soul rest well)
And all my boys went with him, you may guess
I'd little of my poor heart left behind,
But all that was not gone to God with them
Was little Alley's—my last little daughter's
Dear, darling Alley—oh ! I loved her so,
And she loved me :—and though she was my child,
I know no handsomer or better girl
Ever made sunshine in a widow's hut.
By night I listened, and she prayed for me ;

By day I sat, and she beamed blessings on me ;
Such a fine scholar too—the quickest girl
That ever stood at the schoolmaster's knee,
And oh ! so good—but every silver crown
Must have its cross ; and out of all her lovers
She chose the worst,—a handsome, heartless man
That no one loved ; so I said, ‘ Alley darling,
And if you marry him, you'll break my heart !’
‘ Mother,’ she said, and her white arms went round
me

Like a snow-wreath, ‘ dear mother, dearest mother,
I'll never see him, then ; I'll not do that.’
I knew she'd keep her word ; it made my heart
Light as a linnet's feather : but, alas !
I saw her wasting, wasting—dying, dying
Like blossom off the boughs of summer trees ;
All her fine beauty fading, and to see it
Took the life from me ; so I said at last,
‘ Take him, dear Alley, take him, avourneen,
I'll never speak against him.’ In a month
he was as beautiful as a June rose,
And in another she was wife of his.”

Oh ! how her fingers hid her faded face,
And how she wept !—I asked her presently

If there came sorrow of it.—

“ Heavy sorrow ;

Sorrow enough to crush a devil down,
Sent on an angel's head ; I think he loved her
In his wild way, for he was milder to her
Than to aught else ; once when her trouble came
He struck her, but my Alice made me swear
Not to mind that ; and when I think of her
I've no room in my heart for other thoughts.
Well ! there was murder in the land, and men
Said Laurence Daly's hand was murder-marked !
And so they took him. Alice all the spring
Begging upon her knees to pass a word
Between the cruel bars where he was jailed,
Or get a sight of him. Oh ! it was strange,
She was as innocent as God's white light,
And knew that he was guilty, but her love
Grew with her sorrow ; she was ever praying,
And waking up from sleep, blinded with tears
That came of bitter dreams. She'd not deny
(She was so utter true) that he had struck
The life from a lone man, and the black thought
Eat half her heart away. At last it came,
The trial-time. I asked her earnestly

For God's dear love, and for the love of me,
To stay away, but she was bent to go,
And so she went. I felt it in the crowd,
I felt her heart beating against my arm,
And held her close until the cause came on,
Then she took strength again and stood upright
As straight as a young tree, but oh! so pale!"
" And he, the husband, what of him ?"

" He swore

With many oaths he was not there at all
When the great harm was done, and so said more.
But Alley's soul was at its prayers the while
For pardon on their lying; presently
The Counsel of the Crown turned sharply round,
Pointing with his paid finger at my girl,
And said,— " Well, if ye doubt, there's Daly's wife,
Ask where her husband was that night, of her."
And some cried shame, and one good gentleman
Spake up against it, but poor Alley fell
Sobbing upon my neck, and muttered, " Mother,
Take me away, I cannot, cannot tell."
And long before I knew what was to come,
Out of the crowd there stepped a neighbour's son,
A fine brave boy he was; I knew him well,
And knew that he had loved my little girl

All a life long, and knew what cause he had
 To wish him well.—‘ Hear me,’ said he, his eyes
 Alight with sparkles, and his honest cheek
 More scarlet than the judge’s scarlet robe :
 ‘ I know where Daly was the murder-night,
 And swear it for the truth ; there’s none knows me
 Will think I’ve much love left for Larry Daly.’—
 “ What was his tale ? ”

“ A lie, a most kind lie,
 To save the life of his worst enemy
 And bring the happy laughter back to her,
 To her, poor Alley, whom he loved so long.
 Well ! it was ended soon, and he came down
 With no light in his eyes, and a corpse-cheek,
 To where we stood, and leaning over her,
 He whispered, ‘ Alice ! Alice, avourneen,
 Live and be happy ; for to keep you happy
 I’ve sinned my soul away ; may God forgive me,
 And bless you well.’

She never saw him more ;
 He was away upon the open sea
 Before she found the words to thank him with,
 Almost before she knew what he had done.

* * * * *

HAGAR IN THE WILDERNESS.



WEARY waste of blank and barren land,
 A lonely, lonely sea of shifting sand,
 A golden furnace gleaming overhead,
 Scorching the blue sky into bloody red ;
 And not a breath to cool,—and not a breeze
 To stir one feather of the drooping trees ;
 Only the desert wind with hungry moan,
 Seeking for life to slay, and finding none ;
 Only the hot Sirocco's burning breath,
 Spangled with sulphur-flame, and winged with
 death ;
 No sound, no step, no voice, no echo heard,
 No cry of beast, no whirring wing of bird ;
 The silver-crested snake hath crept away
 From the fell fury of that Eastern day ;
 The famished vultures by the failing spring

Droop the foul beak and fold the ragged wing ;
And lordly lions, ere the chase be done,
Leave the blank desert to the desert-sun.

Ah ! not alone to him—turn thee and see
Beneath the shadow of yon balsam tree
A failing mother of a fainting son
Resting to die deserted and alone.
Turn thee and mark the mother's gentle care
Stripping the fillet from her silken hair,
So it may fall to shade his feeble frame,
A glossy curtain from the noon-day flame ;
See—at her feet the shrivelled flagon cast,
The last drop drained, the sweetest and the last.
Drained at her darling's lip to still his cries,
A mother's free and final sacrifice.
Look—she hath taken it, and yet again
Presses the flagon—presses—but in vain.
The scrip is emptied and the flagon dry,
And nothing left them but the leave to die.

To die—and one so young and one so true,
And both so beautiful and brave to view :
She—with her braided locks more black than night,

And eye so darkly, deeply, wildly bright;
He—with his slender limbs and body bare
And small hands tangled in his mother's hair,
And there to whiten on the desert-sands,
A landmark for the laden desert bands !
That thought is stamping anguish on her brow,
That dread hath taught her what she utters now.

“ Son of my soul! the happy days are done ;
“ Thy little course and mine are nearly run ;
“ The white tents wave on Kirjath-Arba's plain,
“ No home for us—no resting place again :
“ Before yon orb is sunken from the sky
“ Together in the desert we must die.
“ Must die, my boy, and I, alas! can give,
“ To make death lighter, or to help thee live,
“ No greater gift, no better boon than this,
“ A mother's love—a mother's fondest kiss.
“ Oh! might I drain for thee this bitter bowl,
“ Or take one torment from thy parting soul,
“ How would I die a thousand deaths for thee,
“ And rack mine own to set thy spirit free.
“ But I must watch thy failing fevered breath,
“ And on this bosom nurse thee into death ;

- “ Must mark thy sinking heart and closing eye,
“ A pang more cruel than death’s agony.
“ What—weepst thou to lose, my gentle son,
“ The pleasant promise of thy life begun ?
“ Weep, if thou wilt ! no mocking eye shall view ;
“ None but thy mother’s,—and she weepeth too.
 “ Alas ! how often at the end of day
“ Sadly and gladly I have seen thee play ;
“ Or with bright eye and brow of anxious care
“ The tiny arrows for thy bow prepare.
“ And thou wouldst pluck the he-goat by the
 beard,
“ And drag him, laughing, from the startled herd,
“ Or leap rejoicing from thy father’s side
“ To chase the leopard in his course of pride.
“ And in her tent thy mother sat the while,
“ Marking thy playful mood with thoughtful smile ;
“ For then I feared that stubbornness of soul
“ That mocked at bonds, and might not brook
 control :
“ I knew from hand so daring, heart so free,
“ That length of days was not a gift for thee :
“ Yet deemed I never that thy father’s hand
“ Would rise to drive us from that happy land ;

“ That he could doom us to the desert plain,
“ And give thee life to take that life again.

“ Nay! do not curse him, boy, for curses come
“ Back on the sender, like an eagle home ;
“ And he is wise and gentle, and will mourn
“ More than we wot of when he knows us gone.
“ Not thy fond father robs thee of thy life,
“ But she—the bitter-hearted Hebrew wife.
“ Her hate hath doomed us to this deep distress,
“ And made our grave in this drear wilderness.
“ Alas! alas! the proudest palms that grow
“ Will shade the hewer who must lay them low.
“ She could not brook thy bold Egyptian blood,
“ The untamed workings of thy wayward mood ;
“ She could not hope to tear my child from me
“ With tongue so bitter and with eye so free ;
“ And by the throne of Pharaoh ! though that eye
“ Hath sent us hitherward alone to die,
“ Though thou must forfeit to the Hebrew wife
“ Thy father’s love, thy mother, and thy life,
“ Yet could I love thee more than I have loved,
“ Or better prove that love than I have proved,
“ It would be, son of mine ! that thou didst scorn

“ The yoke so basely by thy mother borne ;
“ That thou didst mock thy little tyrant’s rage,
“ Nor own my slavery thine heritage.”

Yet was she speaking ; but the cry of joy
Burst from the bosom of the dying boy.
His eager finger pointed to the plain,
His eye had light, his cheek its life again.
“ Look, mother ! look ! we will not die to-day ;
“ Look where the water glistens ! come away !”

She turned—oh ! fairest sight, if sight it be,
The sleeping silver of that inland sea.
She gazed—O gaze of hope and life and light !
Those crystal waters glancing pure and bright ;
From Seir’s red crags and Hazargaddah’s heath,
Eastward to Eder and the Sea of Death.
The dismal wilderness was past and gone,
The waves were streaming where the sands had
 shone ;
Streaming o’er tree and crag, by bush and brake,
The silent splendour of a windless lake,
In whose broad wave so radiantly blue
Each feathered palm, each lonely plant that grew,

Each mountain on the distant desert-side
Shone double, shadowed in the sleeping tide.
Yet was it strange! no dream so passing strange,
As the quick phantom of that fairy change;
And stranger still, that ever as they came
To lave the burning lip, and brow of flame,
The waters fading far and farther still,
Cheated their chase and mocked their baffled will.
Alas! no pleasant waters rippled there;
The lying mirage lured them to despair.

She saw it fading, and there came a cry
Out from her heart of wildest agony;
She knew it gone, and strove to stand and speak
While the life withered in her whitened cheek.
Then her lip quivered, and her lashes fell,
And her tongue faltered in its faint farewell,
“Man had no mercy—God will show us none—
“Ishmael! I dare not see thee die, my son!”

Tenderly—lovingly—her load she laid
Where no sun glistened in the grateful shade;
Softly she pillowed on the sands his head,
And spread her mantle for his dying bed;

No gems were there to deck the lowly bier,
But the pure lustre of a mother's tear ;
No fragrant spices for the sleep of death,
But the soft fragrance of a mother's breath ;
No tearful eye, no tributary tongue,
'To tell his fate who died so fair and young ;
No better mourner for the boy than she
Who weeps to see him what herself shall be :
Than she who sits apart with side-long eye
Waiting till he hath died that she may die ;
And buries all her forehead in her hair,
Weeping the bitter tears of black despair.

So is the desert-sand their death and grave,
No hope of help, no pitying hand to save !

None ! was it then the icy lip of death
Or low winds laden with the roses' breath
That kissed her forehead ? was it earthly sound,
Floating like fairy voice above, around ;
Or splendid symphonies of seraph-kings
Striking the music from unearthly strings,
Whose touch hath startled her ? what inward strife
Stirs the still apathy of parting life ?
What sense of power unseen, of presence hid,
Lifts from her lightless eyes the unwilling lid ?

She rose—she turned—there in that lonely place
God's glory flashed upon her lifted face.

And with the glory came an angel voice,
“ Hagar, what ailest? rouse thee, and rejoice !
“ Look up, and live ! God's ever opened ear
“ Hath patient hearing for a mother's prayer.
“ Arise—take up the boy—his pleading cry
“ Came up to God, and had its end on high ;
“ And God shall make him, in his own good time,
“ A mighty people, in a pleasant clime.”

Then was her sight unsealed, and lo ! at hand
A spring was sparkling in the desert sand ;
Sparkling with crystal water to the brim,
Fringed with the date, and rimmed with liliated
rim.

Swiftly she speeded to the fountain's brink,
And drew a draught, and gave her boy to drink,
And watched the little lips that lingered still,
Nor tasted drop till he had drunk his fill.
Then on bent knees, with tear and smile at strife,
Mother and child, they quaffed the liquid life ;
And stayed to smile, and drank to smile again,
Till sweet and cheerful seemed the silent plain ;

And young leaves dancing on the desert trees
To the low music of the passing breeze,
And birds of passage with their homeward wings,
And fire-flies wheeling in their lighted rings,
And flowers unfolding where the glare was gone
Spake but one tale—Hope ever, and Hope on!

Hope on! aye, though the happy laugh be'dumb,
All the joy gone, and all the anguish come;
Though bitter disappointment, baffled strife,
Leave ye but laggards in the race of life;
Hope on! White day is born of sable night,
And from deep sorrow springeth dear delight.
Angels have knowledge of your cares and fears,
Angels are counting all your bitter tears.
Hope and pray on! patience and prayer are strong,
Stronger than strength of pain, and sting of wrong.
Fail not, and falter not; the pathway lies
Only through sorrow to the sinless skies;
Then, when the riddle of the world is read,
And hate and pain, and time and toil are dead,
Then shall ye learn the lesson of the years,
And wear the coronal Endurance wears.

THE ALCHEMIST.



VENING and morning, midnight and
mid noon,

For twice five lustres, this my cell hath
been,

My pleasure-house and prison.—I did swear,
Kissing the dear dead lips of Leonore
The morn they stabbed her, that my brain should
take

No rest, my withered body no repose,
Mine eye no light, mine ear no melody
Till I had tracked beyond the tread of man
The paths to Wisdom, so that Wisdom's self
Should lift me to the angels, and at last
Throne me in heaven beside the golden throne
Of her whose home is heaven; there with her
To tread the asphodel:—and I have kept
Mine oath, not failing and not faltering,
Till there is nothing left me now to learn:—

The sea's blue bosom is no veil to me
To hide the deep-sea secrets : the round earth
To this my glance hath grown diaphanous
And bares her inner mysteries ; the stars
Dance with their silver sisters, but they dance
No pace, nor measure, that I wot not of.
I can bring subtle spirits to my beck,
And bind them to my bidding : I can trace
The quick life flashing through the vibrant nerve,
Even to its inmost hiding-place.—I know
All that there is and hath been :—this my soul
Hath climbed the hill of Knowledge to the clouds ;
Now shall it stand and gaze.—

What lies below ?

A world whose wonders at this eagle-glance
Melt into cause and consequence, or blend
Like on the dim horizon, distant hills,
Into one common colouring : a world
Whose first law is the law that makes the law
Eternal Need,—Giant Necessity.
A world that teacheth twenty thousand ways
The sophist's last discovery, the child's
Earliest experience, and the idiot's wit,
Things must be—for they are :—and as they are

They must have been :—and worse, and trebly
worse,

Making all knowledge but a dead cold thing,
And strength—the unstrung sinews of a babe,
A world that speeds three hundred thousand leagues
Between the sun and sun, and with it whirls
Mankind, the atomies, forsooth its Lords,
Along Infinity.

—And must I hold

That the high longings of the heart of man,
Its mighty love, and strong affections,
Its energies that ever give themselves
Unto the Infinite, and are themselves
Infinite, boundless ; that the elastic mind
Whose ken can take the viewless atom in,
And clasp the eternal—must I come to think
That these, like those, are servants to the Law,
And in their highest flying, like a hawk
Who bears her silken fetters to the skies,
Wear yet upon their pinions, even then,
The jesses of necessity ?—to me
Such thought were sudden Hell :—

Yet if I doubt

How shall I doubt ? like things do follow like,

And no change tells of an external will.
The seed doth spring to stalk, the stalk to tree,
The tree puts forth its store of summer leaves—
Which Autumn strips and buries: so they rot,
And rotting turn again to earth, and feed
The new leaves of another summer-tide
Whose turn to die shall come: life seeming lost
Generates life: the lady who did take
All eyes and hearts along, where'er her feet
In moving made a music, in the grave
Feeds with her rare white body not one life,
But many many vile existences,
The lowest rare as hers:—all things do range
In dreary cycle—nature's miracles
Are segments of a sure circumference,
Whose centre fated, fixed, immutable,
Is still Necessity:—and this bold boast
Wisdom, the vaunted heritage of man,
His only worthy work,—this doth become
A lamp that lights his dungeon for a space,
And shows the dark and narrow prison out
So faithfully, that not to madden there
He tears the life and knowledge from his heart,
And ends as I will end.

Dead Leonore,

I drink this crystal liquor to our love ;
 And if its strength can part the soul and body,
 And if there be a soul, and if the soul
 Dieth not disentangled, it may be
 That somewhere we shall meet.—I am not vain,
 Chiefly I long to learn what baffled me,
 If I am baffled ; thou shalt teach me that,
 If this rare potion works. [*He drinks.*]

It should be strong :
 The asp's red venom to this draught of mine
 Were but a mother's kiss ; ay, it goes well !
 The life is leaving now !—it leaves my hands,
 And now my arms : how slow, slow, very slow
 The lazy heart beats !—bravely—gentle juice—
 My lids are sinking—it is dark.—I die.
 I will die standing—how the body strives
 To hold the soul, and how the soul doth grow
 Strong—stronger—strongest—ah !

* * * * *

Leonore ! Leonore !

Let me speak, Leonore, before I come !
 —It is not as I thought, YET IT IS WELL.
 Eureka—oh ! Eureka !—

WITH A BRACELET IN THE FORM
OF A SNAKE.



HEY tell of Arab maidens, who with
singing low and sweet
Can tame the green and crested snake
to cower at their feet,
And coil about them playfully in many a subtle
fold,
Weaving them living bracelets, and chains of
changing gold.

And they that Allah honours thus, through many
rolling years
Can never taste of misery, shall never know of
tears ;
Unclouded loves and happy homes are theirs till
life is past,

And a throne of flashing jewels in a Houri's heaven
at last.

So may the serpent circle that I send thee ever be
A talisman of endless good, dear Emily, to thee ;
In joy or sorrow, chance or change, one tale for
ever telling,
How in a true unchanging heart thy memory is
dwelling.

It will not lighten grief; but when the grief is
hard to bear,
'Twill whisper low of one whose joy had been that
grief to share :
It may not bring thee happiness like theirs, but yet
the while
It may remind thee how I loved thy happy Eng-
lish smile.

I send thee not the ornament to do thy beauty grace,
Brighter that beauty could not be, nor fairer thy
fair face ;
Thou art too beautiful for gems, it is but as a sign
How thou hast tamed a tameless heart, how all my
thoughts are thine.

When they are nigh whose souls to thee in worship
never knelt,
Who know thee not as I have known, feel not as I
have felt;
Then if it clasp thy rounded arm, and I am far
from thee,
Oh! let its soft and constant touch plead silently
for me.

Some other lips may speak with thee more elo-
quently low,
Some voices have a charm for thee which mine can
never know;
It may be thus, yet sometimes let the thought come
still and calm,
“ My memory is in his heart, as his bracelet on my
arm.”

WISHING.*



BED sorrow-circled,
 And a pale dying daughter there,
 With lustreless eye
 And tresses of tangled hair.

With forehead that freezes
 The kiss on her mother's lip,
 And wandering fingers
 That feel not her father's grip.

With cheek faintly smiling
 To be ending such agony,
 And quick-panting bosom
 Where the spirit is mad to be free.


* Many old nurses believe still that the soul of a child cannot leave the body so long as the mother holds it, and "wishes" it alive. See "Mary Barton."

But the mother is "wishing,"
And her bosom must keep its breath;
For an own mother's love
Is stronger than strength of death.

There cometh a whisper
And a look from a languishing eye
Lovingly praying
"Dear mother! oh let me die!"

She loosens the link
Of her arms from her daughter's breast,
And the weary spirit
Is away to its glorious rest.

TO MY MOTHER.


 HE crimson sun is sinking,
 And the Highland hills are blue,
 And the silver lake is sleeping
 At the back of Ben-venue.

And weary miles between us,
 And dreary leagues there be,
 But my heart flies back untravelled
 Dear mother mine, to thee.

I mind the time, dear mother,
 When 'twas happiness alone
 To sit and listen ever
 To thy kind and gentle tone.

I think of days forgotten,
 As my fancies older grew,
 How I had wayward changes,
 And thy love no changing knew.

And failings unremembered,
And faults all unredeemed,
Come thicker with my thinking,
And darker than they seemed.

How all thy fond affection
Seemed a thing of certain course ;
A love that asked no love again,
Mine by some hidden force.

So that I wandered careless
Far from thy loving breast,
And sought for other bosoms,
Where my spirit's wing should rest.

And those I would have chosen
Looked for higher love than mine ;
So I turned me—disenchanted,
Back to that breast of thine.

I think how still thou lov'dst me,
How thy lip my brow hath kissed,
And my cheek, for all I hide it,
Is wet—and not with mist.

TO MY MOTHER.

By the holy purple sunset,
And by God's own golden sun,
I sit alone—and wonder
For the little I have done.

But that love—and lie I cannot
Here in this quiet spot,
Hath undeserved been often,
But never once forgot :

So I kneel to thee in spirit,
For thy blessing, mother true,
Where the silver lake is sleeping
At the back of Ben Venue.

THE MOURNER.



HE shadows fall from the minster-wall,
 Where a weeping mother prayed,
 Resting the knee in her agony
 On the stone where her son was laid.
 And she thought how her son was asleep below
 With the grave-cloth bound on his boyish brow,
 And how little he recked of his mother now,
 Or her lonely tears;
 Till she had no heart to end her prayer,
 But almost prayed to end her pain;
 To sicken and die and be buried there
 Beside her dear dead boy again.

The sunlight came with its golden flame
 Down through the holy fane,
 Losing its gold in the histories told
 With colours on the pane.

But it took for the gold as it flickered through
 Purple and crimson and silver with blue,
 And on like an Angel of God it flew
 To the painted wall,
 Where a dead man rose from the place of the dead,
 And lighting all, it lighted best
 The letters along a scroll that said,
 “ Jesus lachrymatus est.”

And her face grew bright at the blessed sight,
 As she rose from the sunny spot ;
 And she spake in joy to the sleeping boy,
 “ Rest on ! I call thee not.
 “ I will call thee again when the years are done ;
 “ I can wait till I see thee an angel, son ;
 “ For the Christ that doth sorrow and save is one.
 We shall meet again.
 “ His pity knows the sad salt tear,
 “ His power turns the tear to joy ;
 “ And pity and power shall bring us there,
 “ Where there is never parting, boy.”

THE FAIRY'S PROMISE.

POET.

BEAUTIFUL silver-winged spirits of
 good,
 That hide in the leaves of the loneliest
 wood ;

Green-kirtled fairies whom none may see
 But the soul that hath passion for Poesie.
 Brownies and kelpies and fays and elves
 Who keep the moon to your own little selves ;
 Ye whose light revel and quick-tripping round
 Bend the white daisy-buds down to the ground :
 The moon may be high and the night may be clear,
 But leave them and list to a poet's prayer.

FAIRY.

Mortal, speak on ! we have loved thee long,
 Thou hast told of our revels in sweetest song ;
 And only, alas ! by the faith of men

Hold we our lives in the grassy glen.
Thou hast never plucked daisy or heather-bell
From the emerald braes where the fairies dwell ;
Thou didst never fright from her leafy nest
The bird that the Fairies love ever the best,
But hast turned thy foot aside silently
When her round black eye fell fearful on thee ;
Thou hast never torn fishes with cruel hooks
From the pleasant ripple of summer brooks ;
So we love thee well, and will list to thy prayer,
Though the moon may be up, and the night may be
clear.

POET.

White-footed Fairy-Queen, close by the sea,
Like a beautiful child at her father's knee,
There sitteth a city beneath a hill
Where a lady is living apart and still ;
Lovely and gentle and wise is she,
I love her most truly and faithfully ;
Better than all that the world may hold,
Better than honour and life and gold.
I would thou shouldst watch her by day and by night,
That her beautiful eyes may be ever bright.

FAIRY.

How shall we know her, that we may keep
Watch of her waking, and ward of her sleep?

POET.

Look for a lady whose glossy hair
Borders a forehead most frank and fair ;
Eyes that are full of a heavenly light
Like sister stars in the front of night ;
Lips curving red like the crimson fold
Of a half-shut rose in the early cold,
Which never with singing or speech were stirred,
But the singing and speech was the sweetest heard ;
Busy white fingers, slender and small,
Little feet lost in her garments' fall.
Graces like these and a thousand above
Shall guide thee in seeking the lady I love.

FAIRY.

What name weareth she ? tell us it true ;
Whisper it low to the fairy crew.

POET.

Read it, sweet Queen, on my beating heart,
Graven so deep, it can never part ;

This shall be sign of the lady ye seek,
Say to her "Janet" and she shall speak.

FAIRY.

Fifty and four of my valiant fays
Shall watch in her walks through the weariest days ;
Fifty and four in their liveries white
Have charge of her dreams in the dreariest night.
And the spirit that doth not his bidding well
Shall pine for the year in a dark nut shell.

POET.

And may two of the truest at either ear
Whisper his name who hath sent them there !

FAIRY.

Ay ! and the fleetest shall come on the wind
Bringing thee news of thy lady's mind ;
Rest thee well, lover ! be quiet and calm ;
Thy lady is charmed with the Fairies' charm.

AN APOLOGY.



UR name should be a name for hope to
utter,
A watchword for the chosen of the land ;
A bloodless nation-flag, beneath whose flutter
The earnest soldiers of the earth should stand.

But gentle eyes look doubtingly upon us,
Warmest of hearts are cold if we be nigh ;
Softest of voices breathe no whisper of us,
Or link it with a sweet condemning sigh.

It may be that they read our purpose wrongly,
And ere they learn to know them, learn to fear
The unresting hands, which silently, but strongly,
Carve the broad pathway of the coming year.

If 'tis a dream to seek in bonds unbreaking,
To link the many-peopled homes of Earth—
One God, one law, one love, one worship taking,
Then, statesman, curl the lip in cynic mirth.

If 'tis a crime to ask for youth's deep yearning,
Access unpurchased to those great old books,
Where the soul's thirst is slaked with draughts of
learning ;
Then, noble, we have earned those bitter looks.

If it be mad to beg for starving beauty
Some other home than the rude glaring streets—
Some other love than false love's fearful duty—
Some other bread than that the harlot eats ;

Look sadly on us, lady ! they will borrow
Tales of wild wickedness to lie to thee ;
Will stain our fame with many a tale of horror,
And treason done to woman's majesty.

They call us godless—ay ! we hold not holy
The golden God, for whom they liek the dust ;
Fools and unwise ! what hope is left the lowly,
Save the dear God whose love they know and trust.

Therefore believe them not: the deed that frightens
One blush into thy cheek—the words that shame
One tear into the eye that Pity brightens,
Is not of us—wears not our holy name.

IPHIGENIA.

RAPT she stood !
 Beautiful—but so very,—very still,
 That but for some light quivering of her
 lip,

And the quick tremble of her lifted eye,
 She might have been of stone. The very wind
 Seemed silent in her sorrow, and stirred not
 One of the golden locks that, like a glory,
 Circled her angel face. Her soft, blue eye
 Was fixed on vacancy, and nothing saw,
 Or nothing heeded. From her parted lips
 (Lips for a God to worship) the warm breath
 Came fast and tremulous, and her bosom fell
 And rose and fell again, like a sea-wave
 When the storm wakes it from its sleep. The blood
 Left its sweet home upon her virgin cheek,
 To tremble to the heart; through all her being
 The fearful pang—the untold agony
 Of the wild death-dread ran.

It passed—she seemed
All her sweet self again—a Grecian Princess;
And with a quiet step and tearless eye,
And a proud sorrow that she might not hide,
To die so young:—she moved to Dian's shrine,
Spotless and fair as Dian.

“ Εἰς ἐρωμέναν.”

ALAS! alas! and is it sin to love thee as
 I love,
 To hold thee in this heart of mine, all
 other thoughts above?

What have I done to see thee stand as thou art
 standing now,
 With the calm and studied silence, and the cold,
 averted brow.

Is it not bitterness enough to know that not for me
 That sweet pale face is beautiful, that gentle voice
 rings free?

Is there not heavy penitence, and store of subtle pain
 Waiting the heart that gives its love, and wins no
 love again?

And thou too art so womanly, and resolute of will;
 So eloquent of other's good, so silent of their ill;
 Why hast thou not one gentle word, one kind heart-
 easing smile

For him who loves thee, and hath loved a weary,
weary while ?

I met thee when my hopes were high, my fancies
light and free,
And for thou seemedst worthy love—I lavished love
on thee :
That I am sad and hopeless now ; all the free fan-
cies gone,
Asks better comfort than a frown, more help than
utter scorn.

Still I will love thee to the last ; faithful in word
and deed,
And hold me ever to the hope that love shall have
his need.
Enough, if thou at last shalt learn how strong true
hearts can prove,
And crown the weary days and years with one
sweet word of love.

ANACREON. ODE 66.

“ Χαλεπὸν τὸ μὴ φιλεῖσαι.”



H! not to love is sad and hard,
 And yet to love is heavy pain ;
 But harder, heavier it is,
 Fondly to love, and love in vain.

Wisdom and worth are trampled down,
 And nought avails an honoured line ;
 Not truth, but treasure woman wins,
 Dazzling her heart with empty shine.

Perish the heartless wretch that first
 Could learn to love his cursed gold ;
 To him our brother's blood we owe,
 Through him our sires are dead and cold.

From him has sprung the ceaseless hate,
 The bloody strife—the warring crew ;
 And worse, from his unholy lust
 Lovers and love are ruined too.

THE DIVISION OF POLAND.

UPON Earth's lap there lay a pleasant land,
 With mountain, wood, and river beautified,

And city-dotted. For the pleasant land
 The icy North and burning South did battle
 Whose it should be; and so it lay between them
 Unclaimed, unowned, like the shining spoils
 Under crossed lances of contending chiefs;
 Or liker April days whose morn is sunshine
 And evening, storm. Its never failing fields
 Strong men and sturdy robed in vest of green,
 And when the year was older took their payment
 In grain of gold. Its ever-smiling homes,
 True wives and comely daughters tenanted
 Round the most holy altar of the hearth,
 Moving like holy ministers. To them
 Sorrow and pain, envy and hate came never;
 Only the mild-eyed, kind consoler, Death


Called them from happy life to happier,
Where eyes are shining that can have no tears,
And brows are beaming that can never frown,
And lips are breathing love that cannot lie.

There went a whisper of their happiness
Over the blue pines of the eastern woods,
Up to the icy crags where Russia's eagle
Sat lean and famine-withered. So he turned
With the hot hunger flashing in his eye,
And listened: presently upon the rock
He whet his beak and plumed his ragged feathers
And rose with terrible and savage clang
Into the frightened air—nor rose alone,
But at the sound the golden beak of Prussia,
And the two-headed bird of Austria
Came swooping up, and o'er the happy land
Held bloody carnival; for each one tore
A bleeding fragment for his proper beak,
As of a kid caught straying and alone.
So there went up a cry from Earth to Heaven,
And pale-eyed nations asked "Is there a God?"

But other blood than Polish blood hath dyed
Green Vistula to red, and there hath come
In these last days a dreader Nemesis—

One who hath spoiled the spoiler, and for blood
Asked blood—for shattered throne hath shattered
 thrones,
So that the nations have forgot their fears,
And cry exulting “ Yea, there is a God !”

THE RHINE AND THE MOSELLE.

S the glory of the sun,
 When the dismal night is done,
 Leaps upward in the summer-blue to shine,
 So gloriously flows
 From his cradle in the snows
 The king of all the river floods—the Rhine.


As a mailed and sceptred king
 Sweeps onwards triumphing,
 With waves of helmets flashing in his line,
 As a drinker past control
 With the red wine on his soul,
 So flashes through his vintages—the Rhine.

As a lady who would speak
 What is written on her cheek,
 If her heart would give her tongue the leave to tell;
 Who fears and follows still,
 And dares not trust her will,
 So follows all his windings—the Moselle.

Like the silence that is broken,
When the wished-for word is spoken,
And the heart hath a home where it may dwell;
Like the sense of sudden bliss,
And the first long loving kiss
Is the meeting of the Rhine and the Moselle.

Like the two lives that are blended
When the loneliness is ended,
The loneliness each heart hath known so well;
Like the sun and moon together
In a sky of splendid weather,
Is the marriage of the Rhine and the Moselle.

ON LEAVING ITALY.

 LONG blue stain upon a belt of gold,
 A rim of earth against the sinking sun,
 A shadow that doth fade, and fade, and
 fade

Somewhere between white water and red sky
 Into a nothing—Italy! farewell!

Ay! fare thee well—I never knew before
 How the cold comfort of that parting word
 Mocks the weak will. I never thought to leave
 Thy cities, sweet one, and thy citron hills
 With grief that shapes itself into a curse,
 And tears, unlike a woman's tears, that come
 Hot from the heart; but now I seem to love
 The billows for their hollow angry roar;
 The sea-birds, for their melancholy scream;
 The wind, in that he howleth nothing else
 Save "miserere";—for these winds and waves

That gird thy coral beach and craggy shore ;
These birds that from thy tallest Apennines
Fetch food, and tell thine own unebbing sea
What they have seen thee : I, and these, and all
Sing well together in a parting song,
And tell thee with our rugged melody
We love thee all too well to love thee now.

Once thou wert mother of as true a band
As ever with strong arms and stronger hearts
Led history along :—obedience
From us to thee was but a thing of right,
Since when thy soldier-son, the Lord of Earth,
Wore kingdoms for the jewels of his crown,
And ours the meanest sparkle ; but we gave
More than obedience, for we gave thee love,
And made thy glories and thy great of old
Our household words ; so when our daughters asked
What deed or thought, what life or death were best ?
We told of noble-hearted Portia,
Of chaste Lucrece, and she whose only gems
Were her bold Roman boys :—we taught our sons
Tales of Horatius and the bridge he held
One to a thousand ; of young Scævola

Who kept the steady colour of his cheek
While the flames ate his hand ; of Regulus,
Fabius and Scipio, (names that even now
Ring like a trumpet,) till the memory bred
Men of our own as apt for memory
In after times : and these, and more than these
Lady of nations ! led to love of thee,
Such love, that once to tread thy battle-plains
And once to wander where those sons of thine
Were cradled into sovereignty, became
The hope and end of life—the greenest palm
Of all a pilgrimage.

And so I came

Tutored and schooled to love thee ;—not alone
But companied by two whose talk should make
A pleasant music in the stranger-lands :—
One whom I knew before I loved—and one
I loved before I knew—true spirits both :
Three were we, born beneath a northern sky,
Three of us loving Italy alike,
And thither journeying.

We saw the vines

Purple and green, carpeting all her fields

Under the Lombard Alps :—we left the figs
 To ripen on the Apennine, and passed
 Through many a league of cork and citron-grove
 Onward by trellised trees, and olive-clumps,
 By Virgil's cradle and by Juliet's grave
 To Venice—to the Lady of the Sea.
 Yet found we never her we came to seek.
 In town or tower ; 'twas very Italy,
 For fairer, lovelier land might never be ;
 But, oh ! not the great Italy we knew,
 The fair, free land of Livius—the Queen
 Who wore the diadem of Eastern gold
 Crusted with Western jewels : she whose sword
 Conquered the world, and swayed the conquered
 world
 —At once a sword and sceptre.

So we passed

Sadder and wiser southward ; and we saw
 A locust-plague upon the land we loved,
 Blasting its beauty :—by the Mincius,
 And where the water of Catullus' lake
 Breaks into blue and silver : farther south,
 By Fœsulæ and the Lucanian hills,


Whose caves have echoed Horace : on the beach
Of the Adrian waters, and the upper sea.
From north to south we marked the gleam of spears,
The flash of foreign swords ; and heard a tongue
Harsh and unfitted to the tender blue
Of Tuscan skies, challenging at the gates,
Th' Italian gates, each son of Italy :
In Lombard homes and Tuscan towns we saw
The sickly livery of the Austrian
Specked with Italian blood—we saw the hate
On many a noble forehead turn to smiles
Even at a step—from many a courteous lip
We caught the muffled thunder of the curse
Hid in a lowly greeting :—last of all
We trod the Eternal City : even there,
There where to breathe is to be free and proud,
The sabres of a great and noble land,
The warriors of our own “sweet enemy”—
The spears of France, of France the fair and brave
Gleamed on the Vatican, and guarded there,
From the just vengeance of a cheated race,
A foolish, fond old dreamer. Italy !
We knew the brand that scarred thy beauty then,
The brazen chain that bound thee.

Italy!

Beautiful Harlot! wilt thou sell thyself—
Sell thy sweet body longer? rise and tear
Thy tresses from the bloody hands that play
Too boldly with their beauty: teach the slaves
Thou wert an empress of the ancient Earth
And they thine appanage: oh! take thy place—
Thine own proud place—the place thy children
won—

Again among the nations! strike a stroke,
One stroke, but one, for the dear memory
Of what they made thee, and the hateful thought
Of what thou art:—then in the Northern Land
A thousand swords shall sparkle in the sun,
And make thy quarrel theirs;—till then, farewell!
Farewell, discrownèd Queen!—sad Italy!

VENICE.


S one who comes from years of weary
 roving
 To look on her who was his early love,
 And findeth for the end of all his loving
 Only a green grave and a stone above—
 Only her silent grave; so shall it prove
 With him whose heart full of her history,
 Leadeth his feet to Venice. Grief shall move
 His eyes to tears as true as tears may be
 At sight of her who reigned, the sweetheart of the
 sea.

Yet she is fair—oh! very,—very fair,
 The ancient beauty is not buried yet,
 But like gold gloss on a dead lady's hair
 That lingers when the eyes are still and set,
 And the lips locked, winning us to forget
 By little and by little all her grace

Till we may bear to lose it:—so is met
Life and cold death on the dead city's face,
Not the sweet life itself, but the life's latest trace.

Still standeth as it stood in days gone by
The glorious basilic with gleaming dome,
Though from its gate no psalm of Victory
Welcomes, as once it did, the standards home:
And where of old over the flashing foam
Golden Venetian galleys swept the sea,
Each stranger trading keel may go and come,
And idle laughter rings, and feet pass free
Where kings have doffed their crowns, and bowed
the unbending knee.

No more the gonfalon along the sky
Flaunts as it flaunted in a hundred fights;
Another flag of foreign blazonry,
Red with Venetian blood, of saddest sights
Streams saddest. If above the city's heights
The holy king of angels still doth stand,
No more he waits to bless her days and nights,
But leaneth off for heaven, in act to expand
His plumy wings for flight, far from the lifeless
land.

Oh Venice ! Venice ! Venice ! would that I,
I, even I, the weakest of the weak
Were of thy children ; then the ancient cry
Though but so late, should rouse thee, One
should speak

The words too long unspoken:—"Rise and wreak,
"For Mark's dead Lion, vengeance on the
bird,

"The bloody vulture of the double beak

"That leadeth to the corpse his carrion herd,

"And shrieks, and flies afar if but a limb hath
stirred !

"Rouse ye for Venice ! raise the Gonfalon !

"Tear the bold blazon of your tyrants down !

"Up for the sea-queen, bear the banner on—

"Dandolo's banner to a ducal crown ;

"Close, and charge once—once for the ancient
town !"

Alas, I idly rave—my home is there,

Where those who suffer strike as well as frown ;

Where men have never learned the yoke to
bear,

Nor on a branded brow calm satisfaction wear.

And ye have all forgotten that the hilt
Is for the hand, and now the day is gone
When for the wasted blood that ye have spilt
Gain had been yours, and what is done, is done:
Therefore, since other hope of help is none,
Pray a last prayer in this your bitter pain
At rising and at setting of the sun,
A Litany to win the Adrian main—
To rise in gentle wrath, and claim his own again.

SONNET

TO THE "MADONNA DELLA SEGGIOLA"

AT FLORENCE.



MADONNA!—Mother! in the northern air
 They styled thee Goddess, and they
 bade me kneel
 Before thy holy beauty :—I am here,
 And worship not! yet how I inly feel
 Thy mortal, mother-splendour, tears reveal,
 Tears of true joy and passionate happiness
 To call thee woman: hadst thou not been real
 I could have worshipped more, but loved thee less.
 No! thou art ours!—by the warm flowing breast
 Thou art of us, and now I know that He*
 Sought how Heaven's glory might be imaged best,
 And seeking still, found no divinity
 Or in the Earth beneath, or Heaven above
 Half so divine as a young mother's love.

* Raffaele.

MOUNT PILATE IN SWITZERLAND.



HE riseth alone—alone and proud
 From the shore of an emerald sea;
 His crest hath a shroud of the crimson
 cloud,

For a king of the Alps is he;
 Standing alone as a king should stand,
 With his foot on the fields of his own broad land.

And never a storm from the stores of the north
 Comes sweeping along the sky,
 But it emptieth forth the first of its wrath
 On the crags of that mountain high;
 And the voice of those crags have a tale to tell
 That the heart of the hearer shall treasure well.

A tale of a brow that was bound with gold,
 And a heart that was bowed with sin;
 Of a fierce deed told of the days of old
 That might never sweet mercy win,

Of legions in steel that were waiting by
For the death of the God who could never die.

Of a dear kind face that its kindness kept
 Dabbled with blood of its own ;
Of a lady who leapt from the sleep she slept
 To plead at a judgment throne ;
Of a cross, and a cry, and a night at noon,
And the Sun and the Earth at a sickly swoon.

But climb the crags when the storm has rule,
 And the spirit that rides the blast,
And hark to his howl as he sweeps the pool
 Where the Roman groaned his last ;
And to thee shall the tongue of the tempest tell
A record too sad for the Poet's shell.

THE ANGEL'S BLOSSOM.

FROM HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN.

H HEARD a maiden sighing,
 And a mother at her prayers ;
 The maiden was a dying,
 And the mother was in tears.

I saw an angel enter
 At the curtained window-bars,
 Like silver light in winter
 From the River in the stars ;

With raiment of rare whiteness,
 And with wings of rosy red ;
 And a golden, golden brightness
 For the glory of his head.

He touched the mother's temples,
 And the mother ceased to weep ;
 He kissed the maiden's dimples
 And she sank into a sleep.

He took the sleeping maiden
In gentleness and love,
With his little burden laden
Like a snow-flake on a dove ;

And whispered, " Thou art welcome
" To the place where planets shine ;
" What wilt thou take to my home
" For a memory of thine ?"

She answered, " Gentle Power,
" If the bud may blossom there,
" I will take the daisy flower
" Out from my mother's hair."

The Angel gave the daisy
With a quiet, careful hand,
And flew by star-paths mazy
Up to the happy land.

But she saw that in his fingers
Another flower shone ;
The flower that latest lingers
When the golden days are gone.

“ And whither dost thou carry
“ That bud ?” He made reply,
“ We may no longer tarry,
“ I will tell thee as we fly !

“ In the city we are leaving
“ There lay a dying boy ;
“ The bud I bear to Heaven ;
“ It was his only joy.

“ His days were long and dreary
“ In the dismal, dismal street,
“ And at night 'twas very weary
“ To count the passing feet.

“ For he lay from morn to midnight
“ Watching the shadows pass,
“ And never saw the sunlight,
“ Nor the pleasant country grass.

“ But when his flower opened
“ He knew the fields were green,
“ And its falling leaves betokened
“ That all the flowers had been.

“ He saw it ere he slumbered,
“ He watched it as it grew ;
“ Its very leaves he numbered,
“ And its coming buds he knew.

“ And to his aching bosom
“ It brought such happy rest,
“ That he loved his little blossom
“ Next to his mother—best.

“ ’Twas in the white December
“ God took the boy above ;
“ Yet doth he still remember
“ His lowly flower-love.

“ It was not made to wither,
“ A thing so good and fair ;
“ Therefore I sought it thither,
“ And take it to him there.

“ In Heaven’s soil abiding
“ These buds shall brighter blow,
“ And tell us pleasant tiding
“ Of those that live below.


“ How know'st thou this, bright Power ?”

Then splendidly he smiled !

“ Should I not know *my* flower ?


“ *I* was that sickly child.”

DEFEAT.


IS bitter to know we are not the best
 In the earnest strife for an honoured
 name;
 That a lower heart and a colder breast
 Hath more of the books than ourselves may claim.

For self-contempt is stronger than scorn,
 It tortures the spirit most wrathfully ;
 And the careless smile on the thin lips worn
 Is to hide the heart in its agony.

THE TRYST.


HOUGH lightning be cleaving
 The breast of the cloud,
 Though the forest be dark,
 And the winter wind loud;
 Though love may be ruin
 To thee and to me,
 To-night at the meeting
 Thy lady shall be.

Though many a maiden
 In sorrow, I wist,
 Hath remembered for ever
 The night of her tryst,
 Yet if thou be unworthy
 Of loving like mine,
My falsehood shall never
 Lend pardon to thine.

If thou comest in honour
As true spoken knight,
Recollection shall treasure
The tryst of to-night.
If thou comest a traitor
To promise and bond,
Strong hate shall be fiercer
Than true-love was fond.

TO THE GENIUS OF DEATH.

A STATUE IN THE FLORENTINE GALLERY.



URPASSING Spirit! oh may he rest on
Safe in the haven where no life-storm
rages,

Whose gentle fancy drew thee from the stone,
And left high comfort for the coming ages.

May no rude step and no unholy noises
Fright the dear silence of the sculptor's grave,
But forest flower-bells with their airy voices
Ring o'er it all the music that they have.

For he hath righted thee, deep-injured Death,
And graved thee in the glory which thou wearest ;
So we shall call thee with our latest breath
Of friends the best, of dear consolers, dearest.

A shape whose home is in the happy city,
A splendid angel borne on healing wings,
Too soft for other passion than sweet pity,
Too beautiful for all imaginings.

A blooming seraph-boy sent down to save
Of sinking hearts a most unnumbered number ;
Unlocking the cool chambers of the grave,
And spreading them a couch for pleasant slumber :

A couch for pleasant slumber, and still rest,
Whose waking is a fair and happy morrow ;
Where hope's hot fever never stirs the breast,
Nor sin, nor weariness, nor sense of sorrow.

We know thee now, dear Death ; ah ! why so long
Were we so blinded to thy beauty's glory ?
We did thee, gentle friend, ungentle wrong,
Railing in angry rhyme and ancient story.


We see thee standing as thou art in stone
A gentle slayer, with a hand unfailing
Striking to the sick heart the weary one,
And with a smile the prisoned soul ungaoling.

Then Death, oh Death ! dear morning of the day
In whose long light, hearts shall be single-hearted,
And lustrous beauty shall not fade away,
And lip from loving lip shall not be parted ;

Come with the keenest arrow of thy quiver,
Strike to the life as deep as stroke may be ;
So shall the soul with quick and eager shiver
Plume its free wings, and soar away with thee.

Florence, August, 1852.


PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE.


 E whose light fingers wander through
 the strings,
 Seeking high matter for your melodies,
 And finding none; oh! leave the withered Past,
 And turn ye to the time that liveth now.
 Will ye be looking in the fallen leaves
 For the green beauty of the parted Spring?
 Or will ye seek in last year's naked nest
 The speckled eggs it cradled?—Be ye wise!
 Gather from all the golden flower-cups
 That blossom even now; the winter-tide
 Cometh to thee and them, and shall it find
 Thy sunshine slighted, and thy summer gone,
 And for the after-bees no honey hived?

Time hath three daughters; one with drooping
 head
 Sits in the shadow she herself doth cast

Weaving a winding-sheet, and one hath charge
Of marriage-robcs and wedding coronals,
Wherein is heart's-ease and the hemlock-bud ;
And one, the last, doth with averted face
And song that shapeth not itself in words,
Spin the small wrapper and the tiny band
To swathe the yet unbreathing :—of the three
One is not for thee, one thou seest not,
And one is all thine own—a willing bride.
Cleave to her like a lover ; she will tell
Things that shall sink into thy soul, and come
Out of the harp-string like a voice that lives
And holds the hearer with its solemn tones.

THE SHRIFT.

OME kneel thee now, fair Penitent,
 And tell thy sins to me ;
 Alas ! I fear that penance drear
 Must set thy spirit free.

Thou hast robbed the rose for the bloom of thy lip,
 And its scent for thy silken hair,
 Yet thou sittest apart with a happy heart
 As if there were nothing to fear.

Thou hast been by night to the gate of heaven,
 Where the angel-harpers throng ;
 And hast borrowed the sound of their golden
 strings
 To sweeten thine earthly song.

Thou hast marked what beauty and purity
 On the seraph-foreheads shine,
 And hast stolen the grace of an angel's face,
 Most beautiful robber, for thine.

But a darker sin is on thy soul,

A sin of a later day ;

Thou must not smile for a weary while

Till that sin be done away.

Lady ! thou art a lovely witch ;

Thou art read in the witch-song well,

And the spell of thy power binds—ay, at this
hour,

Lady ! I dare not tell.

Then kiss the rose which thou hast robbed,

Its pardon thou shalt win ;

Thy stolen flight to the halls of light

It shall not be a sin.

But if thou wilt ask for the holy shrift

On the sin of thy gramarye,

At morn think twice, and at night think thrice

Of him who thinks ever of thee.

GOD MONEY.

THEY throned a God on the groaning
 earth,
 And mighty rejoicing was held at his
 birth ;

And the devils came trooping, and merrily laughed
 As they gazed on the horrible handicraft.

For man is cunning to work his woe ;
 He had moulded him deities long ago,
 And worshipped his work, but the cruellest God
 Sate now in the court where the nations trod.

His throne was a pile of the glittering hoard,
 His altar a furnace, his sceptre a sword ;
 For incense-smoke he had curses and prayers,
 And his drink was a goblet of bitter tears.

And they framed him a Creed and a Liturgy
 For Priests to be chaunting on bended knee ;

But the chorus and creed rose ever the more
When he flung them a grip of his golden store.

Bishop and Chancellor, Monarch and Sage,
Lover and Poet, and Pedlar and Page,
Matron and Maid—not a knee was straight,
When once it had entered the temple gate.

There were nobles with pedigrees, old as the hill,
Licking the dust for his high good will ;
There were hoary men with a feeble grasp
Fumbling the gold that they could not clasp.

There were maidens who care-worn and shivering
stood,
Bartering their souls for their bodies' food ;
And Priests with coin in their eager grips,
Preaching forbearance to starving lips.

And the Scholar forgetting his sacred life
Joined in the mean and unholy strife ;
And Peace fled afar from the fatal throne :
Oh ! that worship of gold was a bloody one !

A SKETCH.

HKNEW a child who came to be a boy,
 But faded long before his summer-tide;
 For he lay down, and grew cold, white
 and still,

With the quick light gone from his weary eye,
 Men call it "dead"—in this most like us all,
 But in all else most unlike. Why it was so
 He knows Who maketh souls; for this was One
 Who might have sought out even God himself
 And told his true name to the cheated nations,
 But that his spirit fed on empty dreams,
 Living to-day upon the promise of
 Impossible to-morrows, till he lost
 The strength to will and energy to work,
 And wandered in the world, not of the world,
 Cursed with intensest longings after good,
 And consciousness that it could never come.

And they who knew him little loved him not,
And they who knew him nothing hated him,
And they who knew him best and loved him most
Held him in pity ! yet his heart was good,
Easily moved, and more than once it gave
For one kind word or smile a whole life's love.
And two, or three at most, who read him right,
Looked deep into his heart, and saw its secret ;
And seeing, wondered ; ay, and wondering loved ;
So that they never left him through his life,
And only smiled when men spake evil of him.

Great visions had he of an honoured name,
For he could tell his sorrows in a song
Most strangely beautiful ; but from this hope
Time had divorced him : so another hope
More fair and flattering he cherished long,
To love and to be loved by some sweet lady ;
And when he found one for his soul to worship
She could not love him ! so this hope went too.
Then took he no more heed to guide his vessel,
But driving pilotless before the storm,
Under the waves of life he went for ever !

TO A LADY SINGING.

ENOUGH! enough! we have listened
 too long
 To the fall and the flow of that eloquent
 song;

We have watched too well, for the spirit's ease,
 Thy fingers dance o'er the ivory keys.

Cease the rich tide of that silver tone,
 Though its accent be sweeter than seraph's own;
 Echo no more with those quivering lips
 The sounds flashing up from thy finger-tips.

What! dost thou joy to behold us now,
 With the half-drawn breath and the flushing brow?
 In the pride of thy power dost laugh to see
 How we wear the chains of thy witchery?


How we faint with delight; like the wandering
band

Who crushed the blue buds of the lotus land,
And drank of its wine to such sweet excess
That they wept for their own dear happiness.

Spare us, Enchantress;—the melodies die,
But there liveth strange pain in their memory;
Alas! when afar from the magical spot
The minstrel's remembered, the music's forgot.

Sing then, but not with that speaking eye,
That calm soft sweetness and purity;
Lest the sound of thy singing the heart impress
With a mark too deep for forgetfulness.

JULIET.


 A maiden
Owned such a silver-lettered name as
this,

She should be lovely as a summer's eve,
All sun and softness ; if she spake, her words
Should fall like lute-tones on the eager ear,
Till silence should be sorrow, and her voice
The spell to make it joy ; her lighted eye
Should beam only with love ; there on his throne
Love like a king should reign ; her eloquent lips
Should whisper only love, and part asunder
Only to meet in kisses ; if the wind
Startled her silky tresses from the neck
Where they slept lovingly, it should but be
To make them cling more lovingly and close ;
And if she smiled, her smile should be a heaven
So bright, so witching-wonderful, that men

Should leave their hopes and fears, their joys and
sorrows

To look and long, and live and die for it.
And if she loved, oh ! it should be so truly,
So deeply, so soul-earnestly ! as if
A thousand hearts had lent their love to her,
And poured the full tide of their fond affections
Into her bursting bosom.

FLOWERS.

WEET sisterhood of flowers,
 Ye tell of happier hours,
 Eloquent eyes, soft hands, and beaming
 brow ;

Ye were a gift from one
 Best loved beneath the sun,
 And ye must bring me memories of her now.

Thou rare red Picotine !
 Seemed she not like a queen,
 Gloriously proud, nor beautiful the less,
 When what I whispered low
 Made the red blushes show,
 For shame to hear of her own loveliness ?

Thou dost remind me well,
 Down-looking heather-bell,
 How she looked downward in that lonely spot,

And to my earnest prayer
Tremblingly gave me there
This star of lover's hope—"Forget-me-Not."

Sweet Rose! thy crimson leaves
Are little happy thieves!
She kissed thee, and her lips are mine alone:
Now by that blessed day
I'll wear thy leaves away,
Kissing the kiss till kissing-place be gone.

Beautiful, bright-winged Pea!
Ah! but I envied thee,
Plucked by her hand, and on her bosom lying.
Oh! it were happy death
There to sigh out the breath;
Never to die, and yet be still a-dying.

White lily of the vale!
I fear thou saw'st a tale
Told without words, when none but thou wert nigh:
Keep faith, sweet bud of snow!
None but ourselves must know—
Thou and the Evening Star, and She, and I.

LIFE.

WOULD you live as some do live
 Listen to the laws they give;—
 Ere you act the sordid part
 Drain the warm blood from your heart ;
 In your eye scorch up the tear ;
 Stamp upon your cheek a sneer ;
 Lie and cozen, fawn and cringe,
 Cheat and chuckle ; let the hinge
 Of your knee be quick to move
 At a look from those above ;
 And for those that are beneath
 Angry curses 'twixt the teeth,
 And blows and frownings be their share
 Who dare be poor, and breathe God's air !
 Cram thy coffers—good or ill,
 The means are nothing, so they fill.
 Break oath and faith ; though some may curse,
 The world smiles—thou art nothing worse.

Laugh at the love to mortals given ;
Laugh at their earnest hopes of heaven ;
So shalt thou live and thrive the best—
The grave-worm wotteth all the rest !

LIBERTÉ, ÉGALITÉ, FRATERNITÉ.



Ye fought for justice, and ye won it not!
 Ye bled for freedom, and ye are not free!
 Why will ye mock your mis-appointed lot
 With songs of joy and words of jubilee?

Tear the brave blazon down! the palace halls
 Ye thrust a king from, hold a king again!
 Ye let God's light into the dungeon walls;
 Like ye the clanking of the mended chain?

Small right ye have to breathe these holy words,
 Ye that on Triumph's threshold turned away;
 Losing with smiles all that ye won with swords,
 Pawning your honour for a holiday.

Lower ye cannot sink; be this your pride,
 Wave the red rag, and waste your fickle breath!
 The triple watchword is for those that died—
 Not ye that live!—yes!—Liberty is Death.

TO THE STATUE OF EUMOUSIA IN
THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

IMMORTAL offspring of a mortal mind!
Sweet shadow of the sweetest deity,
Whose silent spell the willing soul can
bind

In the fine chains of beauty's mastery.
Divine Eumousia! I did gaze on thee
With changing cheek, and fearful beating heart,
In speechless spirit-felt Idolatry,
Till from thine opened lips there seemed to part
A long-hushed living sound, deep-piercing as a dart.

That honey-voice threw off its long, long sleep,
Breathing a wild, rich music; and again
Those fingers struck the lyre in measured sweep,
And woke a whispered, soul-entrancing strain,
Till, like the Siren sisters of the main,

Thy lay had lulled all doubt, and the soft sound
Sank on my spirit as the pure spring-rain
On thirsty drooping flowers; and all around
I saw and heard but thee, in welcome fetters bound.

And with the witching song rose the dim Past,
And the dull Present faded! in that Hall
I stood as one out of Life's river cast,
Alike unheeded, and unheeding all;
While dark oblivion raised his inky pall
For my far-glancing fancies, which to me
Shades of the brave and beautiful did call;
And still I heard thy song—still gazed on thee,
And traversed other times borne on that melody.

This might not last: and soon that beaming eye
Froze to cold death again; thy dulcet tongue
Was locked in marble, and no more the sigh
Of silver music from that rich lyre rung;
But in the air a dying cadence hung
Sweeter than words may say, like the sad tone
Of lonely fountains on the still air flung.
And then the vision past—the spell was flown,
And all the Goddess gone—save that most living
stone.

And was it all in vain? did thy sweet face
Smile on my fond faith only to deceive?
Or may I, Goddess, hope to win thy grace?
May I the high tale of my heart believe
That thou didst bid me sing? then will I weave
Thy praises, Goddess, in my lowly line,
So thou wilt ne'er thy faithful votary leave,
If thou wilt sweetly on his young hope shine,
And lend his lowly lay one sound, one sigh of thine?

OBSCURE MARTYRS.

“ The world knows nothing of its greatest men.”



THEY have no place in storied page,
 No rest in marble shrine ;
 They are past and gone with a perished
 age,

They died, and “ made no sign.”

But work that shall find its wages yet,
 And deeds that their God did not forget,
 Done for the love divine—
 These were their mourners, and these shall be
 The crowns of their immortality.

Oh! seek them not where sleep the dead,

Ye shall not find their trace ;

No graven stone is at their head,

No green grass hides their face ;

But sad and unseen is their silent grave—

It may be the sand or the deep sea-wave,

Or a lonely desert place ;
For they needed no prayers, and no mourning-bell,
They were tombed in the true hearts that knew
 them well.

They healed sick hearts till theirs were broken,
 And dried sad eyes till theirs lost light ;
We shall know at last by a certain token
 How they fought, and fell in the fight.
Salt tears of sorrow unbeheld,
Passionate cries unchronicled,
 And silent strifes for the right,—
Angels shall count them, and Earth shall sigh
That she left her best children to battle and die !


SONG.

TELL me the summer stars
 How many shine?
 Number the threads


In those tresses of thine!
 Count me the countless sands
 Fringing the sea;
 Even so often
 My thought is with thee.

Met me the arch
 Of the blue bending sky,
 Or the wide world of meaning
 That orbs in thine eye!
 Measure the gloomy caves
 Under the sea!
 Even so boundless
 My love is for thee.

DESTINY.

OMEWHERE there waiteth in this
world of ours
For one lone soul another lonely soul,
Each chasing each through all the weary hours,
And meeting strangely at one sudden goal.
Then blend they, like green leaves with golden
flowers
Into one beautiful and perfect whole ;
And life's long night is ended, and the way
Lies open onward to eternal day.

THE SIRENS.

 CROSS the quiet bay
 At end of day
 With lazy dip of oars a bark is flitting,
 Upon the yellow sands,
 Waving their hands,
 Three women, fairer than of earth, are sitting.

And one with painted water-weeds is weaving
 garlands rare,
 And one is stringing speckled shells to bind her
 black-silk hair ;
 And one with rosy fingers wakes the life o' the
 silver strings,
 And with clear note and throbbing throat enchant-
 ingly she sings.

Wander no more on the wearying wave,
 Seek ye no farther a mariner's grave ;

Leave the dull dash of the labouring oar,
Turn from the tempest, and hasten to shore.
Come! are the planks of the plashy deck
Pillow as soft as a woman's neck?
Come! will the roar of the ravenous deep
Lull ye like singing to dreamy sleep:
Come! ye shall lie through the spangled night
Circled in arms of the warmest white:
Come! ye shall dance through the sunny day
Watching the winds and the waters play:
Come to us! come! for we know the best
Where the bunches of purple are juiciest:
Come! ye shall pluck them and press them well,
Drinking their blood from the white sea-shell.
Come! we have kisses and love for each,
Turn the brass beak to the shelving beach.
Never was here dull Pain or carking Sorrow,
But ever bright to-day promises brighter morrow.

“No sorrow here!” they sang, and each in turn
took up the strain,
Harping upon that subtle harp the same sweet song
again.

And still with dainty wreathèd arms, and white, in-
viting breast

They wooed them to the Golden Isle, the Home of
happy rest.

But there along the deep

Lay a ghastly heap

Of white bones, bleaching all the summer long ;

Relics they were

Of the marinerè,

Who heard and passioned at the pleasant song.

So the galley bent her sail

To the rising gale,

And over the silver seas her way went winging,


Trusting the noise

Of the tempest's voice

Better than that fair land and fatal singing.

THE ISLAND OF TREES.

I.


NT was the Santa Trinidad's keel
 Cleaving the ripples of the Southern Sea,
 It was the careful master at the wheel,
 Guiding the good ship well and tenderly ;
 And aye he watched the gilded cedar reel
 Deep in the blue. "The wind sits well," quoth he,
 "To-morrow, an it may God's mother please,
 "We will be anchored at the Isle of Trees!"

II.

"To-morrow, sayst thou? then to-morrow's sun
 "Shall light me to my chosen, quiet home ;
 "I am nigh sick to see the slow day done,
 "That I may rest me, never more to roam ;
 "Far from the feet of men." So answered one,
 And gazed away into the farthest foam,
 Where Night was making stars: the master heard,
 And shook his white beard at the woeful word.

III.

For he was young who spake it, and his face
Gentle and fair; upon his forehead high
Twenty quick summers had not left a trace,
Or dimmed a sparkle in the earnest eye
Whence, like a prisoned bird from durance-place,
His soul looked upward to its native sky;
His lip was fitter for a lover's song,
What could it tell of sorrow or of wrong?

IV.

Was he not young Hypolito, whose fame
To Cordova the old gave brighter glory
Than all her cavaliers? was not his name
A word for ladies' lips and poet's story?
Had not his boyish wisdom put to shame
The laboured centuries of sages hoary?
He, for whose smile the pale-eyed scholar prayed;
He, for whose glance the gay mantilla stayed!

V.

Why doth he leave the city of the sun—
That ancient city in the Spanish land?

What old hopes broken—brighter hopes begun,
Send him to seek the billow-belted sand ?
Why doth he scorn the garlands he hath won !—
Alas, I know not ! He whose high command
Shall wake white Truth from her eternal rest
May bare the workings of one human breast.

VI.

The lamp low-burning when the night was still,
To gloom and grief had lighted him the more ;
The fruit of knowledge of the good and ill
Seemed bitter dust and ashes at the core :
It was a curse to thirst for Wisdom still,
And thirst the fiercer when the draught was o'er ;
To learn the latest lesson Wisdom brings—
“ Wisdom is vainest of all earthly things.”

VII.

His laurel-guerdon of the world's good word
Which young hearts perish in the strife to wear,
Sate on a brow with strangest passion stirred—
With aimless longings, and with causeless care ;

And private sorrows had he—barely heard
 In the broad hollow of the general ear ;
But to his own soul clarion-tongued : to tell
Such sorrows needeth not ; ye know them well.

VIII.

And men smooth-fronted, passionless, and calm,
 And many an eloquently silent book
Taught him of cold Philosophy the charm,
 How he might sit aloof and smiling look
On Life's hard fight : but apathy of Harm
 Is apathy of Joy ; he could not brook
To lose the visions of his passionate thought,
Though but to know them vain, quick penance
 brought.

IX.

So from the struggle and the dust of life—
 The inextinguishable human fight,
Where souls are deafened by the din of strife,
 And battle blindly, dreaming of the right,
He will be gone—and where the skies are rife
 With fresher breathing-stuff will take delight ;
And there, he saith, his lonely home shall be,
Where the green island slumbers on the sea.

X.

And when the twelve white winters, year by year,
Have twelve times melted into scarlet Springs,
Then shall the ship that leaves the wanderer there
Plume for the isle again her hollow wings,
And back to busy life rich treasures bear,
The golden fruit of silent studyings ;
And it may be, his ashes—for that Death
Hath leave to slay, where Life hath leave of breath.

XI.

The Morning came ! the fair, delicious light,
Born between Sun and Moon ; when mortal eye,
Waking with eagle-vision from the night
Glances the farthest up into the sky,
And there beyond the blue, and past the white,
Hath glimpse of Heaven and Heaven's company ;
Flashes of thrones, and gleams of golden strings ;
Red smiles, and purple robes, and silver wings.

XII.

The morning came ! and in the morning ray
They saw an island with a belt of foam,

Verdant and new, and beautiful it lay,
As though its fields and waving woods had come
Above the billows only with the day.
Then gazed he joyously upon his home,
And bade them anchor where the shining sand
Sloped from the quiet water to the land.

XIII.

Like swan that saileth to his snowy love
Sails the light shallop, silently and slow ;
The broad sheet gliding in the blue above,
And gliding shadowed in the blue below ;
Then, where the beach bends inward to a cove
Under the shadow of the rocks they go ;
And furl the sail and rest the dripping oar,
And leave the boat, and leap upon the shore.

XIV.

There built they him a pleasant place of rest,
On the green forehead of a grassy hill,
Hid underneath the leaves like hidden nest—
Cool in the noontide, in the tempest still ;
And thither brought they of their store, the best,
With silent talk drear silences to fill,

Books and sweet music—so with pitying prayers
They left him to live out the lonely years.

xv.

He saw their boat along the billows glide,
And slowly lessen to a very speck ;
He marked them climb the good ship's sable side,
And gaze upon him from the peopled deck ;
He knew them gone:—what though he inly sighed,
The knowledge was a joy, that from his neck
The chain that bound him to his kind was gone :
He stood for good or ill—free and alone.

[*Cætera desunt.*]

WOMAN'S VOICE.

“ Her voice was ever low,
Gentle, and soft, an excellent thing in woman.”

King Lear.



NOT in the swaying of the summer-trees
When evening breezes sing their vesper-
hymn ;
Not in the minstrel's mighty symphonies,
Nor ripples breaking on the river's brim,
Is earth's best music ; these may leave awhile
High thoughts in happy hearts, and carking cares
beguile.

But even as the swallow's silken wings
Skimming the water of the sleeping lake,
Stir the still silver with a hundred rings—
So doth one sound the sleeping spirit wake
To brave the danger, and to bear the harm—
A low and gentle voice—dear woman's chiefest
charm.

An excellent thing it is! and ever lent
To truth and love, and meekness; they who own
This gift, by the all-gracious Giver sent,
Ever by quiet step and smile are known;
By kind eyes that have wept—hearts that have
sorrowed,
By Patience never-tired, from their own trials
borrowed.

An excellent thing it is—when first in gladness
A mother looks into her infant's eyes,
Smiles to its smiles—and saddens to its sadness;
Pales at its paleness—sorrows at its cries;
Its food and sleep, and smiles and little joys—
All these come ever blent with one low gentle voice.

An excellent thing it is when life is leaving—
Leaving with gloom and gladness, joys and cares,
The strong heart failing, and the high soul grieving
With strangest thoughts, and wild unwonted
fears;
Then, then a woman's low soft sympathy
Comes like an angel's voice to teach us how to die.

But a most excellent thing it is in youth,
When the fond lover hears the loved one's tone,
That fears, but longs to syllable the truth ;
How their two hearts are one, and she his own ;
It makes sweet human music !—oh ! the spells
That haunt the trembling tale a bright-eyed maiden
tells.

THE FAIREST OF THE FAIR.

ROAM where you will, by vale and hill,
 From Vistula to Rhone;
 No land is like the English land,

No maidens like our own.

Not the daintiest foreign ladies

With these sirens may compare;

Not Spanish dames with their music names,

Nor Frow with her yellow hair.

Not the nymphs of olden story

In the earth and sea, and sky;

Not the houris of the Prophet

With their melting Arab eye;

Not Circe with her silver wand

And wildest witching smile,

Could pierce the heart with so sweet a smart

As the girls of our own free isle.

They are not young immortals,
They drink no heaven-dew ;
They have loving, mortal bosoms,
And hearts all warm and true ;
They have soft and silken fingers,
And hair that the sun-beams kiss ;
And a vermeil lip, whose nectar to sip,
Is better than earth's best bliss.

Let the haughty Eastern monarch
In his gaudy chariot ride,
And flaunt his might in the red sun-light,
And sweep along in pride.
Are his camels and his jewels,
And his empty, vain parade,
Worth a little half of the merry laugh
Of a lightsome English maid ?

There breathes no music's melody
Like what her sweet lip speaks ;
Bee never tasted honey-wine
Like what is on her cheeks ;
Earth knows no mighty magic
Like the magic of her eyes ;

And to circle her waist were a joy to taste
That might bring down the blest from their skies.

Ne'er tell of statesmen's laurels,
Ne'er talk of victor's bays ;
Let the scholar leave his night-lamp,
And the poet leave his lays ;
There's an eloquence words may not equal ;
There's a power no sword may surpass ;
There's poetry in store, and there's wondrous lore
On the lip of an English lass.

THE DIAL.


“ Horas non numero nisi serenas.”



ONLY when Summer's sun is high,
 And the blue is broad in the summer sky,
 The shadows on the dial face
 Tell of day's race.

Only when so We sit together,
 And loving eyes make pleasant weather,
 Live I—my soul in sunny blisses
 Counts life by kisses.

A PARABLE, AND ITS INTERPRETATION.

 WITH limbs at rest on the green Earth's
 breast
 In a solemn wood and deep,
 A proud form lay through a summer's day,
 In mood to dream and sleep ;
 A streamlet slow in the brake below
 Went sadly wailing on,
 With murmurs wild like a gentle child
 That seeketh something gone.

The Dreamer rose from his vain repose
 With stern and sullen look,
 And the storm of his wrath came bitterly forth
 As he cursed the simple brook ;
 " Thy murmurs deep disturb my sleep,
 " Be still, thou streamlet hoarse ;
 " Small right hast thou of voice, I trow,
 " To tell thy foolish course."

The waters stirred, for a spirit heard—

The spirit of the stream,

And a voice replied with a breath that sighed,

Like the breath of a broken dream ;

“ If the sleeper fear my wail to hear

“ Let him stir each rocky stone

“ Whose cruel force impedes my course,

“ And makes my waters moan.”

* * * * *

Oft in my heart strange fancies start,

And a voice with plaintive wail

Sings, sadly sings, that Earthly things

Shadow in such a tale ;

That wealth and birth on God's free Earth

Oft curse the noise of strife

Which poor men make, as they seek to break

Through the rugged stones of life.

The sad voice sings that ermined kings

Dream on in stately halls,

With curses deep for their broken sleep

When an anguished people calls ;

And when sharp stones wake human moans,
They hear, but never move,
Nor lend men strength to win at length
The Liberty they love.

THE PATRIOT'S SONG.

“ Εἰς οἰωνὸς ἄριστος ἀμύνεσθαι περὶ πάτρης.”

MARCH ! the day is come for battle !
Make your falchions bright ;
Wake the drum and trumpet's rattle,
March to fight the fight ;
For the battle is for freedom,
And our might is right.

March ! the golden crown is failing
From the tyrant's brow ;
All his spears are unavailing
'Gainst our coming now ;
For the battle is for freedom,
And our might is right !

March ! the marching makes us stronger
Even as we come ;

Chains and prison-bars no longer
Keep our brothers dumb ;
For the battle is for freedom,
And our might is right !

March ! our spears are sharp with blessings,
And our swords with prayer ;
Mothers' love and wives' caressings
Are the steel we wear ;
For the battle is for freedom,
And our might is right.

TO A LADY


WITH THE " POEMS OF JOHN KEATS."



ARE not rarest melodies
 Played on silver strings ?
 Look we not to gentle lips
 For gentle-spoken things ?
 Sounds not joy the dearer
 From a joyous tongue ?
 Seems not sorrow nearer
 Sorrowfully sung ?

Therefore these rare melodies
 Send I thee to-day ;
 To a gentle-hearted lady—
 A gentle-hearted lay !
 And it shall be for ever
 A pleasant friend to thee,
 For to wiser poet never
 Could truer reader be.

DEATH AND SLEEP.

 HE last good-night of the vesper-bell
 Shook the still leaf with a longer swell;
 The small bird slept in his woven bed,
 With brown wing shrouding his weary head.
 You looked—and the stars were all away;
 You looked—and they spangled the silent grey,
 Blossoming out as sudden and soon
 As the last new buds in a night of June;
 And over the hills was a silver bar
 Where the moon kept watch for the evening-star;
 For never unloved, and never alone,
 The Star-queen comes to her cloudy throne.

'Twas even then when the sky was still
 I saw two shapes on a western hill;
 One was sadly and sweetly fair,
 Stoled in the gloss of his sable hair;
 His fingers were filled with a sheaf of spears,
 But their blades were dull with his falling tears.

One was a fair and a blooming boy,
His forehead alight with a quiet joy ;
But his lids were low, and his lips locked tight,
And he spake the speech of a dream at night.
One had wings of the raven's plume,
The other was wingèd with silver bloom ;
I knew them then, and I know them now—
The Gods of the dark and the drooping brow ;
Dreams beyond counting, and nights without
number

I had seen the smile of the God of slumber.
The other not yet—but I knew his name,
Before, from his brother, its accent came.

SLEEP.

Brother of me ! I have waved my wing !
The world and its sorrows are slumbering :
I have driven the morning and noon away,
And man is free to forget to-day ;
They sleep by the river and on the hill,
Never, before, were their hearts as still ;
For I fastened the fingers of sorrow and pain
With a bond, till the sun-light shall break it again ;
And Silence, our beautiful sister, keeps

The door of their dreams till the morning peeps.
Thou, who dost love them better than they
Have the wit to know, or the strength to say,
Wilt thou not sit thee and sharpen to-night
The sting of thy spears, that they strike aright,
And tell me thy tales of the sorrow of life,
And the soul's sweet joy at the ended strife ;
How Anguish doth strive for its Angel-prey,
Till the glad life springs from the sinking clay ;
And the groan of pain is a cry of bliss
When the spirit hath sight of its happiness ?
Why dost thou sorrow, strong brother, now
With a drooping plume, and a darkened brow ?

DEATH.

Silver-winged Sleep ! when the dawnings break
Do they sing thee hymns for thy service-sake ?
Cometh there ever a blessing or prayer
For thy gentle love and thy tender care ?

SLEEP.

Dost thou not know that the Poets keep
Their rarest rhymes for the Soother, Sleep ?
Hast thou not heard as thou flittest along

A mother sing to me her cradle-song ?
At the sick-girl's pillow they know me well,
And woo me with many a magical spell !
But most thou may'st hear them at break of day
Chorussing sleep, when the gloom is away.
The lover that leaps from the promise of dreams
To a bride and a kiss, that no longer seems ;
The worker that wakes from his healthful rest
With a steadier hand and a stronger breast ;
The love-stricken lady and sorrowing man,
And the captive that slept while the watches ran,
All sing me praise at the step of morn,
For the pleasant sleep that is over and gone.

DEATH.

Have I not loved them as well as thou,
Though I came with a sterner and sadder brow ?
The spears that I bear in my strong right-hand,
Are they not keys to the Better-Land ?
Alas ! if they strike to the sinking heart,
So must the soul and the body part ;
But they open the prison and shatter the chain,
And loosen from life and its lingering pain ;
Yet never to me do the mortals sing

A carol of thanks for my comforting.
When shall the blindness of man have end?
When shall they know me their lover and friend?

SLEEP.

Comfort thee, brother? they do but sleep,
And the darkness of life doth their senses keep.
Spake I not now, that my praise is said
Most when the midnight is vanished and fled?
Kind-hearted Brother! the time shall be
When anthems and hymns shall be all to thee;
For the morning shall come to the long life-night,
Then shall they know thee and love thee aright.

And I saw them fade into the stars above,
With hands fast locked, as in spirit love.
And I wandered again to the city by,
With a hope to live and a heart to die.

FINIS.



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